"Where there is no vision the people perish"

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THE POET AND THE NEW ERA

WE are promised a fairer life for all and that a new era is about to dawn upon the world. It may be so. Everything is possible, especially in the promises of professional politicians. This fairer world may be brought about if art is allowed to take the lead in the national life, but not otherwise.

. . . . . .

The poet is the only real master of life, because of all men he is the least dependent upon material things.

To the rest of the people life is a slave-driver, because almost all men are the loyal subjects of a gross material power.

The word poet is here used to indicate the creative artist, whether in literature or music, or the fine arts of drawing, painting and sculpture.

Lessing went so far as to include dancing in the ballet as a creative art. In these days people speak of the art of the cinema, but I think even Lessing would have drawn the line at that. In the same vein, Hans Von Bulow said "In the beginning there was rhythm," but I don't think he would have extended the line to jazz or swing, whatever swing may mean.

We all have our favourite art; to some it is music, to others it is the poetry of the written word and again to others it is the plastic arts. But all great art must contain both poetry and music. The poetry that is without music is dead verse, and the music that is without poetic ideas will not live. We should all be able to hear symphonies when looking upon a masterpiece of painting, and it is natural to use the terms of one art to describe the feelings aroused by a sister art. When, therefore, we speak of the poet we include the artist, and when the artist is mentioned the poet is there also.

. . . . . .

England is the richest country on earth; not because of her material wealth, but because of her spiritual heritage.

No other country has such a trio as Shakespeare, Milton and Shelley. Germany might well say that no country has such a trio as Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. Both statements are true and I believe very firmly that if poetry had been as popular as the internal combustion engine, or the cinema, our two countries would never have fought each other.

Unfortunately, poetry can never be popular because it belongs to the aristocracy of thought. The poet is not only the master of life, he is the only real aristocrat left among us.

The English landed aristocracy passed away the moment it decided to decorate the boards of joint stock companies, and was joined by their promoters. One result of this is that the vulgarity of monied wealth has spread over the entire people. The poet alone is able to remain aloof from this vulgarising process because of the non-material medium in

which he works. His riches consist of the sun, the sky, the sea, the rivers, the trees and the fields, the sonatas and symphonies of the birds :

> I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers
> from the seas and the streams,
> I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
> in their noon-day dreams.

These are the limitless riches of the poet ; this freedom from the grossness of life gives him aristocracy among men.

The poet lives on thought, not on things, because he knows that where thought is, there also beauty may reside.

The vulgar man, on the other hand, cannot indulge in thought because he is opressed by things such as wealth, property, business. These are euphemistic variations upon the great theme of human selfishness which drowns the melody of personality and leaves the man a mere robot.

Diogenes was a greater man than Alexander.

The smallness of a man's material wants are the measure of his greatness. True, there are other men beside the poets who want little. There was the famous case of Delane of *The Times*. Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston tried to subdue him. It was no use offering him a peerage or anything else for, as Lord Palmerston said, "the damned man wanted nothing." Yet, this man prevented Germany from attacking France a second time in 1872. Other men who wanted nothing that the material world could supply were Keir Hardie and the late C. P. Scott. No earthly rewards would ever have tempted them from the path laid down by their own true thoughts.

This kind of man is the real aristocrat of all time, for the word aristocrat comes from a Greek root meaning the best.

The moderately capable mediocrities who rule the world of men and women are targets for the famous jibe :

> Just for a handful of silver he left us,
> Just for a ribbon to stick in his coat.

About the rest of us poor mortals who are born into this world to work and suffer and die, the epitaph upon an early Georgian Prince of Wales has a general application :

> Here lies Fred
> Who was alive and is dead,
> Had it been his Sister
> No one would have missed her,
> We had much rather
> It had been his father,
> But as it was only Fred
> Who was alive and is dead,
> Nothing more need be said.

If, then, the poet is the best man and the only aristocrat, he is surely the real leader that the people need.

. . . . . .

These are times when the shape of the Social Order itself is being considered and reconsidered. Unless the poet makes a more definite contribution to political thought than he has done during the last twenty or thirty years, very little improvement can be expected.

Milton, Byron and Shelley were all fierce politicians as well as poets and their political influence is felt even to-day, along with the beauty they gave to the world. We cannot honestly say that we have any political poets to-day to compare with them. This is a great pity, for the enemies of poetry are everywhere in great strength. The three most important of these are big business, the professional politician and the economist. It may be said that society as we know it is led by men belonging to these three sections of the community. In the struggle that is surely coming to this country, the poet will find himself completely isolated. Yet one Byron was worth more to Greece than all the British politicians put together.

. . . . . .

If we compare the mental processes of the poet with those of his enemies we see such an antagonism that agreement is impossible.

We are told that an attempt is to be made to make life a little fairer for the people than it has been in the past.

Big business need not be considered because this is merely another name for glorified selfishness.

The professional politician is also chiefly a careerist and an opportunist.

The economist is the least suspect and he claims to be seeking facts only. How does he approach the subject ?

The Beveridge Report will be in most men's minds and this is a good example of an unusual liberality and largeness of view. There is nothing really revolutionary about it, but it is the best thing of its kind that the orthodox Parties have considered so far. It will probably be shelved.

It is typical of the economist that when he is trying to do something for the poor man, he does not enquire how much he can be given, but how little he can live on. He cannot rid his mind of the absurd notion that certain institutions are permanent, like landlords, building societies, banks, and so-forth. The result is that he goes round the shops and finds out the ruling prices of commodities.

After ascertaining how much the man must pay the landlord, grocer, butcher, baker, etc., he allows him two refinements. He allows him to make arrangements with the Prudential for his death, and he scrutinises

the amount he must pay to the building society for the privilege of living in a ruin when he has paid for it. After these costs are all added up, he fixes what is called a living minimum wage. One concession is always made to the man; he has one great right, the right to work in a way pleasing to whoever employs him for profit. The economist has then done with the man, for he has provided him with all the material necessary for existence.

. . . . . .

Now the poet makes a diametrically opposite approach to this problem. His first thought is not the man's existence but his life. His first axiom is that all men born into this world should have equal shares in the sunshine and equal leisure for the enjoyment of that sunshine. He should everywhere be free from any kind of toil that deadens personality. He must always be in a position to refuse work unless that work is to benefit the entire community.

Since money has to be discussed, every man must be allowed at least 5s. per week for books or else he will be faced with intellectual starvation. Then he should have another 10s. for either a concert or a theatre each week. If his tastes run in the direction of grand opera, a further allowance must be made because you cannot have prima donnas or prima ballerinas for nothing.

To the poet these are the essentials of life. The other things, such as rent, rates, taxes, food, clothes, coal, and light, are only accessories to mere existence. They will be fought for, as always, by the two snarling dogs—Capital and Labour.

From this it will be seen that if the poet takes a hand in the re-shaping of the social order, a more generous and humane system will be established.

. . . . . .

It seems to be generally agreed that something will have to be done about education, but no one has the slightest idea as to how it can be done.

Those of us who are old enough to remember all the Old Party attempts to tamper with education are certain of one thing. That is, that a generous and democratic educational system will most definitely not be set up in this country without revolution.

Now upon which side is the poet going to take his stand?

It is unthinkable that he should take sides with the Stupid Party. It is because men are so starved of real education that they are so indifferent to poetry.

Even education will not make a generation of poets, for the poet is a born solitary, but it will give a new life to the appreciation of poetry.

This is the education that will have to be fought for and the poet will have a formidable row of opponents. These are, the five banks, the two

building societies, the insurance companies, the stock exchanges, the F.B.I., the I.C.I., and the workers who own 1,000 million pounds in War Saving Certificates. Also the Lords and Commons and the Fourth Estate.

It may be asked what is there left in the country ? The answer is easy, the poets and the dispossessed.

The poets must be worthy of the times for they will be searching times. They must be poets of a different breed from those that arose between the two great wars.

We have had quite enough of the doctrine of disillusion and the technique of word straining.

The new poets must be men who can create beauty, not men who moan about themselves and sing of dirt and decay.

We do not want any more little coteries of conceited young men writing little notes to each other disguised as reviews, and calling attention to a widespread influence that reaches no further than the points of their pens. We want poets who can fight the battle of personality against selfishness. We want poets who are able to use the exquisite old forms that gave to the world all its imperishable beauty.

. . . . . .

It may be objected that the poet cannot fight against such overwhelming odds, but he is the only man who can.

There are several ways in which he can score victories. Art is education. When the new education arrives, it will be the duty of art to supplement it by every means in its power. To take the adolescent at the end of his studies and teach him the lesson of beauty, the lesson he must continue to learn all his life.

It must be the duty of the poet to oppose ugliness with beauty so that all the world may see the frightfulness of ugliness.

Almost everything that is ugly in our daily life can be traced to some kind of selfishness. Therefore, art must fight selfishness.

Are not these two battles worth fighting ? Are these not two victories worth striving for ?

I can see no nobler mission for the poet than to be on the side of the dispossessed. He must be if he is serving beauty, because he must fight the possessors of material wealth. Those men have reached the goal of riches through the jungle of selfishness. It is not possible to amass riches without the practice of selfishness. It is this vice alone which makes great possessions such an ugly thing.

The new education therefore, when the school leaving age is raised to 18, must give prominence to poetry, and the poetry it must use must be the poetry that aims at killing the ugliness of self.

. . . . . .

Here it will be observed that no matter what system of education we have there will always be a very small public for poetry. This is granted at once, but surely there can be some improvement upon the present attitude.

I do not think that aesthetic taste has ever reached such a low level as in this year of grace 1943, and I should like to bring home this point with some instances.

It is three hundred years since Milton wrote *Lycidas*. Yet, in spite of the increase in the reading population, I am sure there are fewer people who know this poem now than when it was written.

Dean Inge was once asked what he considered the finest poem in the language and he instantly replied the first forty lines of the third book of *Paradise Lost*. Yet, how many of the forty-seven million people are there in these islands who know this work, how many are there who could understand the first six lines of unimaginable beauty. It is the duty of the poet of the future to alter this state of affairs.

It used to be said that without art we are no better than the animals. I am not at all sure that this is not a libel on the animals when uttered by a nation that appreciates crooners. I only know that I once had a fox terrier who used to listen with rapt attention to the wireless, but only when a classical violin concerto was being played. I think he preferred Yehudi Menuhin to any other violinist and I am certain he suffered exquisite agony when he heard Bing Crosby.

We may have advanced a little further than the animals in the appreciation of art, but our progress has been woefully slow when we consider that the Romans had a public library in the year 167 B.C.

An Englishman who had been a prisoner in Japan for some months after Pearl Harbour, managed to make his escape, and gave some of his experiences over the wireless. He said the dance bands in Japan were at first forbidden to play American jazz tunes, but they gradually came back to them. The censorship of these tunes was left to the police, and the Japanese police did not know the difference between Mozart and Duke Ellington. I wonder how many English policemen know the difference. This terrible state of affairs is another thing that the artist of the future must rectify.

I once spent a few hours in Marlow looking for the house where Shelley lived, and in this pursuit I called in at the lounge of an hotel. As I stood at the bar talking to the landlord I asked in a timid voice if he knew where Shelley had lived. He took down the telephone directory. The lounge was only divided from the tap room by a low partition, and a man was there sitting disconsolately behind a pint pot. He could see the landlord and he had evidently heard my question. He called out "You'll

not find him in that there. He's the poet what's been dead hundreds and hundreds of years." The poets of the future must see to it that such a deplorable incident should never occur again.

I don't suppose that English people have ever looked up at the sky so much in a thousand years as they have done these last three years. They have not been looking up at the beauty that has always been there, but at the evil thing that is now hovering over us all. It is for the poets to try to abolish this evil and also to show the people the beauty that they have always missed.

I think one of the saddest things I have read during the war is the case recently reported in the Press of a man and his wife being blinded by blast from a bomb. With great courage the wife says she has found many things to console her. She says that she has now heard the song of birds for the first time in her life. What a sad comment on our poor life ! To think that a human being has to be made blind before she can appreciate one of the most delightful things of life ! Yet this can be understood. In our chaotic society people have to use all their faculties to the utmost in order to merely exist. They are oppressed by material things and the things of the spirit are killed.

. . . . . .

It may seem a stupendous task for the poet to fight such odds as have been outlined, but when we think of some of the feats of the pen there is nothing to be alarmed about. Darwin, with one book, altered the whole attitude of science to the history of man and his origins. Karl Marx so influenced Lenin with Das Kapital that he changed the lives of 170 million people. Carlyle changed the whole intellectual mind on the subject of the Puritan revolution, by his *Life and Letters of Cromwell*. The ridicule of one man, Voltaire, killed the Holy Office. So great was the power of his pen that in the Ferney period of his exile he was utterly feared by Catherine the Great, Frederick the Great, and the rulers of France. Rousseau, by one ringing sentence, may be said to have sounded the revolutionary tocsin in France.

What has been done once may be done again. One objection may be raised against this. The written word has not the power that it once had, because there is too much written and writing has reached a dead level of mediocrity. Also there is too much specialised manufactured opinion. We boast a free Press, yet it is largely under a quasi-plutocratic control. This is one of the things the poet must strive to alter.

It is claimed that the poet is the master of life, and that he is the only real aristocrat. He must also be a fighter and almost a miracle worker. He must exorcise the demon of prosperity that has poisoned the soul of man. He has to alter the whole outlook of all men and women on this

striving earth. To do this, he must drive from all men's minds the eternal vulgar question, "Will it pay ?" The question to be substituted must be "Is it beautiful ?" If our poets will concentrate on this particular subject there is some hope for the world.

We have been promised freedom from want and freedom from fear in the new life that lies ahead. Our youth, however, are cynically sceptical of these promises, and with good reason. The only freedom that we really need is the freedom from human selfishness, and this we shall never gain so long as men worship the doctrine of material prosperity—the child of envy, hatred and malice, and the original parent of all is selfishness. This is the greatest, meanest and vilest of all sins, the sin of self. All other faults are the merest bagatelle beside it.

All our so-called leaders, temporal and spiritual, failed in their promises after 1918, and they will fail again because the great forces of self-interest are too strong for them.

The beautiful and valiant youth of our time are dying on the stricken fields of selfishness. The whole world is mourning the death of its heroes and the destruction of its love.

Art alone can soften this supreme tragedy of the human race.

The idols of prosperity in this modern Temple of Baal must be broken and only art can produce the Ikonoklast.

H. L. Senior.

A DISTANT PROSPECT OF OXFORD

IF to that long-loved city I came stumbling,
In darkness and the silence of the dead—
One derelict searchlight stabbing overhead—
With anxious fingers fumbling
Until they bled round stones shattered and crumbling ;

Blind as if wakening, staring into space
Of night and the dark shapelessness of hell,
In terror until desperate fingers fell
On some beloved face,
Sleeping secure in a familiar place ;

I should come doubting, groping, seeking,
Knowing that Oxford ways are safe and sweet,
Even smouldering, gashed, smoke-reeking :
Homing would tread the stones of Merton Street,
And know the Cherwell flowing at my feet.

Annette Saunders.

CHRISTABEL

PART III, or (haply) PART I.

IN the desolate house where the babe lies dead,
In the silent room by the empty bed,
Though nothing is as it was before,
And the spirit is weak and the heart is sore,
One thought may come to the musing mind
"The child is safe from the storm and the wind ;
"For us the heart-break of the pitiful morrow,
"But he has escaped from a world of sorrow !"
But woe to the parent of living child
If the mind be dark and the visage wild ;
Who seeks in the eye and seeks again
For the light of reason, but seeks in vain ;
O what can assuage his sore distress ?
What thought may console his wretchedness ?

Now thus it chanced as I divine
When Lord Roland de Vaux and Sir Leoline—
In violent mood had rent in twain
The love that had bound them in friendship's chain,
Nothing was left but sorrow and fear,
The Baron must part with his lady dear,
And Lord Roland's joy his three-years-maid
(God in His mercy lend us aid !)
Though her face was fair and her aspect mild,
The look in her eye was strange and wild :
O sorrow and shame if the soul within
Be the cankered bud of a flower of sin !
Now who is she who climbs so swift
To some dark recess in yon snow-streaked clift ?
Oh bleak is the ridge of Tyndale fell
And rough is its breast but she kens it well !
There is never a tree or a fern-clad rill,
And frost-stained braes are black and still,
And nothing is moving above or below
On the blue hillside on the streaks of snow,
Save a wide-winged buzzard with dappled breast
Swooping and screaming above his nest,
And the passing shape of a damsel bright
With locks as yellow as chrysolite.
Now her goal is won and with radiant air
She is piercing the depths of the Witches' lair ;

There is light enough though the lamps burn dim,
And the hellish crew are rehearsing their hymn :
"From the womb of the Night who was big with her sinning
With her paramour Death didst thou yearn in thy starkness :
Mis-creation of ill from thy birth and beginning
And Prince of the Power of Darkness !

"At thine altar of leasing there kneels in devotion
A maid to thy liking exceedingly fair—
From the cup of iniquity pour her a potion
Of the bread that is death let her eat and despair !"
"She hath eat, it is done
She hath drunk, thou hast won—"
"And as the token of her vow
We do sign and seal her now,
But what is the seal and what is the sign,
One maiden only shall once divine,
I missa est, fair Geraldine."

She hath hied her home on feet of flame
But little she recks of the mark of her shame ;
But you will not find her in hall or in bower
Or within the keep of that lonely tower ;
Her father is old and needs her care
But he quails at the gleam of her golden hair.
She disdains his love and she mocks at his rage,
And she mimics the moan of querulous age :
She cannot broider, she will not sew,
And she broke her virginals long ago ;
But when the shadows of twilight fall,
Neath the ruining blocks of yon ancient wall
Where the Roman soldier encamped in his pride,
Though its towers are gone, and its gates stand wide—
She will wander alone and with ear attent
She lists to the sound in the crannies pent,
A maid to be wooed there was none to wed,
But she sinned in her soul with the Souls of the dead :
She had never felt the tremulous bliss
Of a half resisted lover's kiss—
But by swirling stream and by lonely mere
She was fain to finish her ghostly feere—
Some tribune gay, whose unhouseted sprite
Enthralled her fancy by day and by night.

There are blissful maidens who draw their breath
Calm as the Maid of Nazareth ;
Who walk in the light which is not from hence
Clad in the robe of innocence :
And maidens there be who are sweet and frail,
May the tears of the Saints o'er their sins prevail !
But the maid who rejoiceth at foulness and hate,
What cleansing stream shall regenerate ?

Now hark to the horn and hark again
That breaks the silence of Tryermaine—
Lord Roland has waked from a troublous sleep
And stands at the foot of the Castle keep
A riderless steed to the gate is tied
And his wounded rider leans head on its side—
Who scarce can muster a broken plea
To shield and to shelter his misery—
"Men hailed me once as Sir Bedivere
My castle is standing by Ulpha's Mere—
I'm lord of the field and lord of the fell
In snow I wed with fair Christabel.
The sire Sir Leoline kens me well.
Sir knight I am spent and stricken sore
O stretch out thy hand, for I can no more—"

ERNEST HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 1846-1920, was the son of the Reverend Derwent Coleridge, and grandson of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He wrote these lines during the later years of his life. He was editor of "Anima Poetae" (Heinemann, 1895), "Letters of S.T.C." (Heinemann, 1895), "Coleridge's Poems" 2 vols. (O.U.P., 1912), "Byron's Works" Poetry, 7 vols. (Murray, 1898-1904), "Poems" (John Lane, 1898), and other works. He had much of the Coleridge glamour and eloquence, and as a fervent Vice-President of the Poetry Society in its early days he delighted in reading and talking about his grandfather's work, especially the Ancient Mariner, on which he contributed articles and glosses to THE POETRY REVIEW. In the original Christabel, Part I has a Somersetshire background, and Part II shews the influence of the Lake District. A visit to the Roman town of Corbridge in Northumberland, and Tynedale evidently provided the scene for Part III or (haply) Part I.

REACTION

When the war-lords have all done their worst and the slaughter is over,
When the battered and blood-sodden world has had time to recover
From its latest and maddest attack of homicidal mania :

Then I will sail in a ship the new-old world over,
I will tread on foreign soil and greet every man as a brother—
An enemy that day no longer, nor even a stranger.

MARY MAIR.

INSENSATE ARE THE DEAD

DRAB as an out-wrung dish-cloth
The February day.
Soiled snow ; muck on the roads ;
Draff in ditches ;
Thick skies grey, grey.
Insensate are the dead,
Clay, cold clay.

Westerly wind and thaw sets in,
Snow trickles away ;
Life stirs in the pregnant woods ;
Buds are quick
On a mild March day.
Our young dead lie still,
Clay, cold clay.

MITFORD HONE.

TO THE NAZI HIERARCHY—1943

YOU who have raised your altars of hypocrisy,
Perverting youth with dull unchanging din ;
Building belief upon a crude philosophy,
Provoking human wrath, begetting sin—
You who protest with simulated innocence
And broadcast lies, cloaking your sullied guile,
Fearing, through secret hours, the dreaded consequence
That comes from plundered homes and tortures vile ;
You, the foulest travesties of tyrants ancient,
Dreaming the age-long wish of worldly gain,
Winning by crushing the common man, who, patient,
Still waits the hour of recompense for pain . . . .

You, too, must fail, like those long dead, forgotten—
Mere names afflicting schoolboy minds to-day—
You, too, will soon be dead, your bodies rotten,
Remember well, you too are made of clay !
You have proclaimed your blindness and your weakness
Gloating on masses, lifeless cold machines,
Missing the clear unruffled power of meekness,
Failing to find the spirit strength that cleans.
Poor puffed-up dupes of devilry and evil,
We do not doubt, you'll soon lie 'neath the sod,
For you are doomed, vile spawnings of the devil,
Forgetting, in your course, the fear of God !

ARTHUR LYNNFORD-SMITH.

ROBERT SOUTHEY

ON March 21st, 1843, died Robert Southey; so that this spring witnesses the centenary of his death. His epics will appear dead with him; his ballads and shorter lyrics the prey of school children; and his bookish activities dispersed with his fine library. Even to the friendliest, he remains at most, it will be felt, the memory of a conscientious and high-souled workman, chivalrous to his associates, a pattern of domestic virtue, a serene and cheerful inhabitant of the downlands and rolling spaces of thought, his philosophy that of Epictetus, his consolation, duty. Even so, that record is no little thing, and may deserve notice in the present chaos among those who are fortunate enough to turn that way. But Southey also, on consideration, is something more.

In the first place, amid the closely parallel circumstances of our time to the Napoleonic age, it may be noted that few had a shrewder judgment of the course of events than Southey, a more steadfast faith in the ultimate victory of the righteous cause, or a clearer insight into the means to attain the end so ardently desired. His volumes may well, therefore, furnish a manual of aids to reflection and an enchiridion in steeling the will during the current emergency. But, still more, they have a quality which embalms for immortality. They are different, it seems to their readers, and different with a flavour of their own, from anything else written in the language.

Of two characteristics of Southey's poetry, little will be said here; but they are important for the student of our literature in general, and even for a just estimate of the poet's position in letters. In the first place, Southey had a great, if not a paramount influence in forming the poetical character and moulding the form and expression of a greater poet than himself. The example of Southey's methods is written all over Shelley's "Queen Mab"; and the discipleship showed its traces much later. And secondly, Southey was long involved in a poetical conflict, little sought by himself, with a still more dynamic force in the verse of his period, Lord Byron. From "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" to "Don Juan," Byron assailed the more gentle Laureate with his envenomed shafts. It is customary to consider that, in the bardic disputants' respective "Visions of Judgment," the more vitriolic peer had matters all his own way. But I do not think so, for myself. Byron's stanzas are probably a rather stupid, and certainly quite blasphemous, attempt to entangle the sober and serious Lakeland recluse in a network of poisoned meshes and hold him up to unquenchable laughter. The Centaur offers the Heracles, who works with painstaking toil in human service, what he hopes is a shirt of Nessus and looks to see the agonised recipient immolate himself on Mount Skiddaw. But Southey's poem is a beautiful reflection of the quietude of Keswick, a felicitous adaptation of the evasive hexameter to the calm of Derwentwater and meditations upon society in solitude. There is no poetry in

Byron's glittering fiery rain; but there is some in Southey's peaceful plashing fountain.

When Southey, in boyhood, studied Picart's *Religious Ceremonies* and planned a series of epics on the mythologies of the world, he meditated a great work. It would be inaccurate and anachronistic to compare his labours with such a piece of finished and deeper scholarship as the "Golden Bough." But Southey's purpose stands out as a landmark in the study of comparative religions and rituals. And, for my part, I much prefer the ingenuous poet to the Cambridge savant. His work is not so objective perhaps, with less of scientific or anthropological acumen. But it is not disfigured by the wearisome and platitudinous verbiage of missionary memoirs with which Frazer overloads his few exquisite pictures and charming vignettes. Southey's poems are works of art, not compilations of unending and burdensome detail. We can at least see whither we are going, and are not lost in the hot and fetid jungles of New Guinea, or endeavouring to cut our way through the orchid-hung morasses of Amazonian forests, as in a nightmare, seeking endlessly the golden mistletoe that we may lop it with a blunt sickle, which ever rejects the keen incision. Southey and Frazer have much in common; but the vast cyclopaedia of the pedant, however vivacious, will moulder in the dust of antiquarianism long before the more delicate symphonies of the Muse.

This is not the time or place, amid the austerity of war-time limitations, to offer a detailed study of "Thalaba," "Kehama" and "Madoc." But one suggestion may be made. These poems are inspired by the struggle of humanity against the apparently overwhelming tyranny of evil. It is nowhere said; but plainly the magicians of the Domdaniol caverns and the almighty incarnation of wickedness, Kehama, typify the aggression of Napoleon, in Southey's own age. Still more, then, by us may they be studied as representing the Teutonic pestilence and the philosophy of annihilation. Few passages can be read with greater satisfaction than the lines in which Kehama aspires to drink the Amreeta cup of immortality and reign in omnipotent evil. And the chant of triumph at the overthrow of the demon of iniquity well expresses the deliverance of mankind from its oppressor:

> The Almighty Man appear'd on every side,
> In the same indivisible point of time,
> At the eight Gates he stood at once, and beat
> The Warden-Gods of Hell beneath his feet . . .
>
> Then was the Man-Almighty's heart elate;
> This is the consummation! he exclaimed;
> Thus have I triumphed over Death and Fate.
> Now, Seeva! look to thine abode . . .

O fool of drunken hope and frantic vice !
Madman ! to seek for power beyond thy scope
Of knowledge, and to deem
Less than Omniscience could suffice
To wield Omnipotence ! O fool, to dream
That immortality could be
The meed of evil !

And the struggle culminates with the devastating *peripeteia :*

Then Seeva opened on the Accursed One
His Eye Of Anger ; upon him alone
The wrath-beam fell. He shudders . . . but too late ;
The deed is done,
The dreadful liquor works the will of Fate.
Immortal he would be,
Immortal he is made ; but through his veins
Torture at once and immortality,
A stream of poison doth the Amreeta run.
And while within the burning anguish flows,
His outward body glows
Like molten ore beneath the avenging Eye,
Doom'd thus to live and burn eternally.

The fiery Three,
Beholding him, set up a fiendish cry,
A song of jubilee ;
Come, Brother, come ! they sung ; too long
Have we expected thee.

It is a barbaric chant, but it gives me infinite satisfaction.

The Odes directed against Napoleon bear out the same theme on the more equal plane of history. "Madoc" narrates the overthrow of the blood-guilty cults of the West. And "Roderick" tells the infamy, and ultimate expiation by contrition, of the King who brought down the avenging incursion of the paynim hosts on Spain. Of the ballads, "Queen Mary's Christening" is always delightful. The "Pilgrim to Compostella" is that rare product, a humorous and quaint masterpiece. And "The March to Moscow" is a metrical triumph. Doggerel is raised by a savage intensity to a lyric exultation.

If the function of poetry is to give pleasure, those who have no appreciation of Southey miss one of its keenest experiences. We may enjoy, in reading him, the same thrill which our rougher fathers, it may be presumed, entertained in watching their favourite game-bird gain the mastery in the cock-pit. Byron tells us that "Sir Walter reigned before him" in the fisty ring. He also informs us that he was himself "the grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme." He is a magnificent braggart, and bears it off well. And in the humbler mains of birds pursued by Christopher North, Southey, some may say, is no match for Byron. Yet he

stands up doughtily with his spurs, and struts and crows little less than my lord. And even the great Byron, if it came to metrical acrobatics and rhyming gymnastics, probably owed rather more to Southey's efforts than he cared to confess, though he had indeed the grace to admit that "Roderick" was "the first poem of the age." So be it, though others may prefer other excellences.

We hail, then, a stiff, unbending Briton, more learned (may we say ?) than Mr. Churchill, but just as unswerving and eloquent, and with a like boyish spirit. Waes hael to Robert Southey, where he sits in Valhalla, drinking (as he hoped) from the skulls of his enemies !

EDMUND CASSON.

LAMENT

GERHARD, young Gerhard, where do you rest ?
Under the aching scent of the pines
or beneath the iron-hard mountains' virginal mist,
by the stone wall where the quince tree leans ?
And do you sigh in your sleep ?

In the sad roots of the lemon grove,
between the blankets of earth and snow ?
With the vague tapestry of river-weeds above
or where the coloured winds of spring sigh.
And do you dream in your sleep ?

Gerhard, slim Gerhard, what do you see ?
Rhythmical furrows curled to the sun
or pressing companies of horsemen foaming by
and a purpose spurring on the men ?
And do you ride in your dreams ?

Is there still strength in your sculptured limbs,
your long-fingered hands and smooth hard thighs ?
But maybe the agued coldness of earth reclaims
your sungilt body its age to ease.
And are you cold as you ride ?

Gerhard, young Gerhard, where are your sons,
unleashed progeny coiled within you,
the outlawed potentialities of your loins
searing the flower that could not win you.
As you ride do you regret ?

ROLAND GANT.

THE SPHINX OF ENGLISH POETRY

IT is some years since I first felt the wild wizardry of Emily Brontë's strange poems, or visited Haworth Parsonage to peer through lens at the microscopic MSS of the sphinx of English poetry.

On re-reading the poems, I have been deeply impressed by their eternal values and abiding beauty in the midst of this present conflict and chaos. Yet the tragic and circumscribed events of Emily Brontë's life were no soil for the growth of a cheap or facile optimism, but nurtured a faith fed by fortitude and watered by inspiration.

When she first made her poems, she wrote, like Emily Dickenson, the American poet (with whom she has much in common), to express her deepest thoughts in solitude without a thought of publication. Her fame, too, like that of Emily Dickenson, has been posthumous, with a significance much greater for this generation than for her own. Unlike Charlotte, whose energy and driving ambition made the contacts with publishers, Emily appears to have taken little or no interest in the subsequent fate of either *Wuthering Heights* or the poems. Charlotte tells us that Emily would sit listening to reviews "half amused and half in scorn." Everyone who knew Emily was struck by her deep reserve and indifference to society. Ellen Nussey, after a visit to Haworth Parsonage, said :

> "Her extreme reserve seemed impenetrable, yet she was intensely lovable. She invited confidence in her moral power. She had a strength of self-containment seen in no other. She was, in the strictest sense, a law unto herself and a heroine in keeping to it."

In poem after poem Emily reveals this self-containment, this heroic independence, that sprang from the mystic's desire to withdraw to the secret chambers of her heart, pursuing the solitary way in stillness, companioned only by her God :

> Why I have persevered to shun
> The common paths that others run,
> Heedless alike of wealth and power,
> Of glory's wreath and pleasure's flower.

From the poems we find that the visionary experiences, which deepened n intensity in the last years of her life, came on the moors or in the silence of the room at night when everyone else was asleep. Her revelation of God was always associated with some form of nature. Never, perhaps, have moors, skies, pools, flowers, birds, winds, been so passionately, so vehemently loved by any poet. Wordsworth loved his Lake District, but not with the native vigour and fire that Emily Brontë loved the Yorkshire moors :

> He comes with western winds, with evening's wandering airs,
> With that clear dusk of heaven that brings the thickest stars.
> Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire
> And visions rise and change that kill me with desire.

What have those lonely mountains worth revealing,
More glory and more grief than I can tell,
The earth that wakes one human heart to feeling
Can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell.

We remember, as we read these lines, Catherine Earnshaw's strange dream of how unhappy she was in heaven, till she woke, sobbing for joy, to find herself on the moor again.

It is with the touch of a lover or of a mother for her child that Emily Brontë describes the things of the moors which fascinated her unendingly from spring to winter :

Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.

The linnet in the rocky dells
The moor lark in the air,
The bee among the heather bells
That hide my lady fair.

The wild deer browse above her breast
The wild birds sing their song.

. . . . . .

A little and a lone green lane
That opened on a common wide,
A distant, dreamy, dim blue chain
Of mountains circling every side.

Even in the melancholy of autumn or the rigours of winter she delights in them with an unsatiated joy :

The mute bird sitting on the stone,
The dank moss dripping from the wall
The thorn trees, gaunt, the walks o'ergrown,
I love them—how I love them all.

It was probably this sense of vital kinship with nature that gave her a peculiar power over dogs, especially her dog, Keeper, and the hawk, Hero. The bird flew away when Emily stayed nearly a year in Brussels, and Keeper (according to Ellen Nussey's account) was "a solemn mourner at Emily's funeral and never recovered his cheerfulness."

Emily's God was not the God of creeds and churches that Charlotte and Anne worshipped, and that Branwell drunkenly contemned, but a brooding spirit of the universe, from which all life, including her own, sprang, and unto which all things must return, for fresh moulding. She does not seem to have cared whether she existed after this life as an individual spirit, or was only absorbed into the source of all life :

Though earth and man were gone
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And thou wert left alone,
Every existence would exist in thee.

Charlotte talks of Emily's daring and original ideas in religion and philosophy, ideas that must have sounded very alarming in that cramped, bleak parsonage.

Emily's moments of ecstasy, when she actually experienced some mystical consummation, left her, not only with an acute nostalgia for the spirit world she had glimpsed behind the shows of things, but also with a sense of non-attachment to the contacts of everyday life. Though she performed her household tasks most efficiently, nursed Branwell devotedly through his repulsive sickness, and was attached to the members of her own family, yet none of these rooted so deeply as her wild, passionate and tender love for the nameless spirit of the moors :

What I love shall come like visitant of air,
Safe in secret power from lurking human snare.
What loves me, no word of mine shall e'er betray
Though for faith unstained, my life must forfeit pay.

He for whom I wait thus ever comes to me.
Strange Powers, I trust thy might. Trust thou my constancy.

. . . . . .

So, with a ready heart I swore
To seek their altar-stone no more
And gave my spirit to adore
Thee, ever-present, phantom thing,
My slave, my comrade and my king.
A slave, because I rule thee still,
Incline thee to my changeful will
And make thy influence good or ill.
A comrade, for by day and night
Thou art my intimate delight,
My darling pain that wounds and sears
And wrings a blessing out from tears
By dreadening me to earthly cares.

And am I wrong to worship where
Faith cannot doubt, nor hope despair
Since my own soul can grant my prayer ?
Speak, God of visions, plead for me
And tell why I have chosen Thee.

The return to normality from ecstasy was often terrible in its loss and pain :

Oh, dreadful is the check, intense the agony
When the ear begins to hear and the eye begins to see
When the pulse begins to throb, and the brain to think again
The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the strain.

Many, like D. H. Lawrence, have suggested that the mysticism in Emily Brontë (as in Emily Dickenson) was due to sex-frustration and a cramped environment, but though there may be truth in this, it is not a completely satisfying explanation. Charlotte and Anne Brontë, with a

similar heredity, environment and sex-frustration, did not resemble Emily in mysticism. For two centuries there has been a surplus of sex-starved spinsters, but no notable increase in mystics.

There are interesting glimpses in certain poems of an eager, childlike gaiety, a keen zest in life and living that we find in the child Catherine in *Wuthering Heights,* or Charlotte's conception of Emily in *Shirley,* and we are not surprised to find Ellen Nussey saying that Emily showed intense glee and enjoyment on the moors, and loved mischief. This wild gaiety has in it something free and elemental, like the wind or the birds, and when Charlotte wishes to describe the dead Emily, her figures of speech spring naturally from the earth of which Emily seemed to be part :

> "Like a field of green corn trodden down, like a tree in full bearing struck at the root."

For a woman, Emily Brontë was singularly impersonal. Charlotte said to W. S. Williams, "Ellis (Emily) does not admit that the proper study of mankind is man, at least, not the artificial man of cities." Though she frequently mentions "I" in her poems, it is as if she were writing of a third person, viewed with detachment, without sentiment or falsifying, and in relation to some powerful force or conception of beauty. The characters of Heathcliff and Cathy, the "I" of the poems are larger than life, are personified natural forces.

Like all the mystics, Emily followed her own intuition and vision, rather than accepted teachings :

> "I'll walk where my own nature would be leading,
> It vexes me to choose another guide,
> Where the gray flocks in ferny glens are feeding,
> Where the wind blows on the mountain side."

She was never alone on her long solitary walks, accompanied only by Keeper. The spirit of the moors was in her and about her, like the wind blowing, like the air she breathed, like the images of flowers and grass and birds imprinted on her mind.

There is a terrifying courage and stoicism in many of the poems, and we know from Charlotte's letters how these virtues were shown in Emily's life and particularly during the trials of Branwell's dissipation and disease, and her own suffering and death. Consumption caused her spirit to burn even more fiercely in the exhaustion of her body. Her stoic philosophy and faith in the continuity of life took from death most of its terror. Her "space-sweeping soul, with its wild desires, quenchless fires and quenchless will" was like a river of three tributaries, gold (mind), blood (body) and blue (spirit) tumbling into the inky sea of life. The constant swirling of the waters bred a longing for a rest that would be a merging in some impersonal life :

O for the time when I shall sleep
Without identity,
And never care how rain may steep
Or snow may cover me.

In her earlier poems she is reaching with a wild yearning towards the more complete vision, often conscious of failure and futility :

An endless search and always wrong.
Stretching eager hands to death,
Implored to change for senseless rest
This sentient soul, this living breath.

But before the end of her life, her mystical experiences had poised her spirit, strengthened her iron will, and taken her into a larger life where personal frustrations and disappointments seemed no longer to matter. Nowhere is this more clearly shown than in the magnificent "Last Lines," with their trumpet call in the face of agony and death :

No coward soul is mine . .
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:

There is not room for death
Nor atom that his might could render void.
Thou, thou art Being and Breath,
And what Thou art may never be destroyed.

The orbit of Emily Brontë's life was limited but intense. She was never away from the Yorkshire moors, except for a year in Brussels and a brief spell teaching in Halifax, and she made no friends outside her own family. Her poems reveal this world of narrow compass but infinite depth. Even in her verse patterns she did not experiment (as Emily Dickenson did), but was content to repeat simple ballad metres to express the most profound thought. She was not interested in performing feats of technical agility (that often mask a spiritual and emotional paucity), but expressed elemental depths and heights in deceptively simple language. Like Emily Dickenson, she chooses simple words of common currency, but of them fashions poems that baffle us with their ultimate meaning :

a single word, a magic spring
That touched, revealed a world . .

Matthew Arnold said of Emily Brontë that her soul :

Knew no fellow for might
Passion, vehemence, grief,
Daring, since Byron died.

But this is only part of the solution to the enigma of "this strong, original mind, full of strange though sombre power." Among many greatly talented English women poets, she is the only genius and mystic. Her work has influenced novelists so diverse as D. H. Lawrence and

Charles Morgan, and interested dramatists like Clemence Dane, John Davison and Alfred Sangster, but it is most to be comprehended by those whose minds have knelt in worship, when "the outward sense is gone and the inner essence feels," though few will have either the imagination or courage to dare, like Emily Brontë, the final bound.

W.E.A. Lecturer. D. R. W. Carr.

BACK TO THE PIT

A 52 year-old Northern miner, recalled, had for one year rejoiced in his first job above ground: "I've done 35 years of it, and it's going back to hell, but I'm going."

HE once again descended into hell
That he might loose his seven times tortured brothers.
If we break faith with this our noblest seed,
And chain their sons to purgatory like theirs
While ours drink spring by Isis, England falls,
Or the skies open on us God's reserves,
Who sent us Hitler's killers of the sky
And bombed our cities into general tombs.

Durham and York, Canterbury and Westminster,
Bristol and Bath, let our fair churches fall!
They mock the piety of the hardened heart
Which sanctifies our slavery for coal,
And sends our strongest heads and stoutest hearts,
Our keenest rugged wits, our rough hewn statesmen—
God grant the South may never plane them smooth,
Bevel their tongues to serve a Party end!
Down to forgotten darkness under sea,
Chained Vulcans in the island they kept free.

Redcliffe McKie.

JULIET STANDING

IN the outstretched spoon pressed upon my face
Love dawns in the child. From the womb cavern,
A Da Vinci sketch sleeping in reverse,
In slowness of the ballet nine months more
Days climb and the new limbs somersault
And the fingers stretch to sensitive tips,
And the curled mouth finds communication.
Laugh, baby, at your own upright posture
You have conquered with humour the birth dive,
Risen from belly crawl to measure heights.

M. E. Mitchell.

AFTERMATH

ON life's bright threshold stand the age's heirs,
No fine estate but ruin now is theirs,
Who smiling once had thought to win
Quick triumph and begin
That glorious reign and living splendid
But lately boasted ; now such hopes are slid
Into the gaunt abyss
That shatters youthful bliss.

Hands once encountered now asunder torn,
Grope for death's engines ; each disdainful morn
Sees with veiled eyes a deep flushed eve,
While men and women grieve,
Indomitable still in spite of grief,
Firm in their purpose nor will seek relief,
Meeting each death-winged hour
With impatient valour.

A winding hedgerow bordering a lane,
In thought recalled now with nostalgic pain.
And curtained windows glowing red,
Which once a welcome shed
Telling of love there ; now the arms which hold
Cling with affliction mournfully untold,
And sorrow's floodgates swell
What pity knows too well.

Glory has perished stripped of its false lustre.
Trampled in sodden fields where dead men cluster ;
Only cold courage now survives,
Telling of countless lives
Offered not vainly for immortal things,
Upholding a new breed of uncrowned kings
Who stand among the van
Of liberated man.

Merged in the welter of death's drab parade,
Irked by discomfort of exactments made
By daily necessary tasks,
And the slow urge which masks
Each concentrated effort to attain
Some minor progress that the whole may gain,
Are those whose diverse ways
Gain also meed of praise.

In hours despondent when life's cares depress,
How sweetly enters like a brave caress,
    Thought of a vanished day that still
    With reminiscent thrill,
Again rekindles, calling back to mind
Former impressions happily enshrined
    In a well memoried spot
    Still treasured unforgot.

Yet man must grapple in this fateful hour
With spirits adverse and those forces dour
    That seek to rob him of the prize
    Of this great enterprise,
Which Angels watch with calm solicitude,
And patron Saints invoked, these strivings crude,
    With powerful prayers to end,
    Their intercession lend.

When noise of battle and the crimson stain
Fades from the air with that large weight of pain
    Oppressing many hearts which know
    That here the sense of woe
Cannot be lifted till a wider view
Brings in perspective consolation new,
    What signs of comfort wait
    For these disconsolate.

Those young men adult grown before they tasted
Youth's clamant sweetness lost in years wasted,
    And women whose seared hearts have seen
    The blight of years lean
Wither their fond desires with bitterness;
The help which brings relief to this distress
    Must spring from that goodwill
    Which absent brought this ill.

Men seek happiness, in visions finding
The end they wish for; when smoke clouds blinding
    From clash of ways and means at first,
Are by good sense dispersed,
They may see enter a new conception,
In steady movement leading all men on,
    Keeping its sober course
    Where reason governs force.

RAYMUND BOURNE.

JANE, ROSANNA AND ME

I LONG, I look back to that far, hot summer,
To that shimmering summer of our childhood,
In the tall house behind the coast town.
Do you remember ?
We played in the high rooms and on the lofty landing,
Where the window, flung up for the heat,
Threw blurs of colour on the stairs
And on our holland smocks.
The window looked down on a garden—
A long, lawned garden, not our own,
But after which we yearned and so possessed
As children do, admitting no denial.
And when the play upon the landing wearied us,
We crept down through the tall house, past strange doors.
One landing smelt of oil and one of parrots,
And all were strange and all inviolable.
So we went out into the dusty street ;
Into a street of cabs and horse-drawn buses ;
With stalls of vegetables and slopes of fruit
Set cobble-wise, ripe-rotten in the heat,
And butchers' shops and fish-shops, scarce redeemed
By quantities of ice. We turned aside
And took the great adventure to the sea,
By roads new-tarred and pitted by the feet
Of circus elephants. Old roads that led
Past little houses, sunning with shut eyes,
Striped blinds or blistered shutters ;
Garden plots all parched to cracking, and late wallflowers,
Rags of old velvet, limp with their own scent.
Then the white palings of the coastguards' row,
And then the sea.
The sea stood like a wall between white walls,
Until we saw the beach that flattened it.
The pebbles of the beach were hot as coals.
The beach was all a-bloom with coloured tents
And shoals of holiday people spread in groups
From breakwater to weedy breakwater.
Sound came in waves and drowsed our ears to deafness,
The deafness of the sea-wash and the calling.
The sea itself was warm and the tamarisk hedge,
That grew beyond the beach, went drifting through
The fingers of the hand one trailed along it

Like soft, warm hair. Along the promenade
The high hotels threw shadows. People sat
On white cane chairs along the balconies.
Do you remember envying them ? I did.
To be so high, so rich, and so at ease !
So back we used to go, when lamps were lit
And air was stifling, back through the quiet town.
Impossible to sleep in the tall house.
We had a special freedom that hot summer.
We used to go and stand upon the bridge
Across the railway lines and watch long trains
Come sighing from incredible distances.
Sad, sad the evening distance to a child.
Do you remember passing through a street
With area-railings, wells with windows in them ?
We saw, deep down in one dark basement-room,
A little child asleep. We thought it strange
That one should sleep so low. We slept so high.
We called it Upsidedown House.
Oh ! but that—that was a summer of discoveries.
Nothing is newer than its memories
Nor leaves me so unconscionably old.

SARAH STAFFORD.

CONFLICT

THE parson prayed in church for them to-day,
For those young men who laughed and went away.
Hubert Merson, Leslie Simpson, Harold Gore,
Gilbert, his brother, aye, and many more,
And all of us were not in church just then
But with them in the dusty desert's din.

Grant unto them Thy strong protection, Lord.
Rex Duncan, Philip Cotton, Jeffrey Ford,
George Mason, all the names we knew so well,
Deliver them from battle's bloody hell.

The parson ceased, the people seemed content,
And rising from their knees, outside they went.

But I, the unbeliever, stayed behind,
To wrestle with such bitterness of mind
That only comes to those who have no faith,
Incredulous that prayers could save from death.

CELIA E. BANGHAM.

WHAT OF THIS ME ?

I WAS forged on God's anvil.
The stars were the sparks which flew from His hands,
To light me my manhood . . . . . .
My impulses flame, my deeds are set free
In tiniest fractions of time that are me ;
Split in the moment they leap from the brain—
Where thonged the deed ? where had the impulse lain ?
The firefly pulses her rhymes in her light,
The meteor rocks the phantoms of night—
Whence and what am I ?

For a purpose so little
I seem, tho' I'm allied to cosmic things—
Thus real is *my* kingdom . . . . . .
I seek God's Truth, and so far have I won ;
Earth's Truth I hug close to *my little* sun ;
However much this ego I suborn,
Around me earth revolves—thus was I born—
Which and what am I ?

As a dime was I minted.
The worth is the mind He placed in His clay,
To mould Him His Kingdom . . . . . .
He smiled on these, the treasures in His purse,
Then tipped them all into the universe :
The pulse of life, the worlds, the wealth of time,
Illimitable gold, with me a dime.
So will man, wistful, gather at the close,
Hope leap within his breast, while mercy glows—
Then who and which am I ?

I have thought of the others,
Supremely dying, giving of their all,
To save us our freedom . . . . .
Such greater thoughts make finer this my task.
I challenge self, and so discard the mask
Of me, this pity for myself, this sorrow,
The present fight with them to save the morrow—
For who and what am I ?

As a pebble I wander,
In waters that surge to and from the sea,
Forth and back—whereafter . . . . . ?
This pebble the soul of me hides I know,
Though what of the soul and what does it sow ?

The city's four-square at the end I'm told,
Its minarets glow in my heart—I'm bold
To fight as warriors do for this land,
For something beautiful hid in His Hand—
Still—who and what am I ?

Major, South Staffs. Rgt. W. T. Shorthose.

IN TIME OF MISFORTUNE

WHAT have we done, my soul,
What have we done,
That so long we should be denied
The light of the sun ?
Did we slight the revengeful gods
In an earlier age,
And now have their pagan wrath
For our heritage ?

Strange and dark the road,
Ah, dark the road,
Turn out the last bright lamp
In the old abode,
Take the black paths of night,
Stumble and stray—
Ahead there is surely the light
Of another day.

Years ahead, my heart,
Oh, years ahead,
We shall laugh and be glad again
And forget the dead ;
But now, ah ! the empty house
And the swinging door,
And the days of laughter and love
That will come no more !

Nancy Pollok.

DECAY

THE flowers linger late though Summer's done.
Their autumn gold is tarnished at the centre
Yet day by day, in quiet farewell, they enter
The glittering crematorium of the Sun.

Irene H. Lewis.

BLACK MAGIC

WHEN you and I set out together
That gloaming of still weather,
When we heard the roar of city and home
Fading over the hill behind
And saw only the road winding
Away—drawing us away—
Winding into a moonless magnetic loneliness :
Your gaiety, tap of your sandalled feet,
Lightened my heart to laughter,
Quickened its beat.

We sat on a bank to eat our sandwiches
In blank trivial talk
Till the unconvivial dark and silence
Gave us their privacy.

And when we resumed our walk
The cottages were shrouded, their terriers slept,
Tall whispering hedges crowded upon us,
And trees crept close
Bearing a deep screen of boughs,
Leaning with an air of conspiracy.

Subtly—subtly the night and the wilderness
Their outland wizardries prepared,
Weaving in wily incantation
Their work of reclamation—
Of assimilation to their own savage essences.
I felt the old alchemy biting into the bone,
Dissolving the coalescences of precept and discipline,
The blood smiting my ear-drums and hot beneath the skin,
My brain revolving, reeling in strange intoxication.
My schooling, my catechism went like straw on fire.
All I knew was the pressure of long-imprisoned desire,
As if a wizened claw were reaching out of the past
To twang me like a stretched wire.

There at my elbow you walked,
There you freely laughed and talked,
So young, gay, light, vivid,
So remote :
Not dreaming in your self-possession
Of this strain and compression,

This breaking loose of the wild goat
To claim its bride at last
By Earth's connivance and Heaven's recession.

Wasn't there a catch in my throat ?
Didn't my voice fail
And the trees sway together in strong tender wooing ?
Didn't you know what I was doing—
Clutching my heart, so desperate to prevail ?

. . . . . .

What conquered perhaps was Fear—
Plain fear of the terrible venture—
Of the hot ravines of a man's nature,
The sounding mountains and crags, the sombre forests,
The waters that leap and swirl in the deep canyon . . .

Or was it—beautiful companion—
Some shadow of truer love
Thrown from above ?

Whichever it was, the heathen owls jeered,
And the tall trees shook their skirts in scorn ;
And the Earth muttered a heavy weird
On flesh that shirked her behests inborn :
And we came back across the plain
On a road of prose as straight as you will,
Trudging home to the town again
To the lights the traffic the law the drill : . . .
And so, no more of the eldrich hill
And the dangerous rustling lane.

W. H. Coates.

EASTER MORNING IN AN ENGLISH VILLAGE

"WHAT of the night, watchman, has there come
Throbbing of war hooves round earth's stadium,
Sound of a far bomb dropping, a swift shell ?"
"No, but an Easter bell !"
"Now that the cumbrous clouds of night are rent
What signs are issuing from the firmament,
Clash of contending wings, a siren warning ?"
"No, but an Easter morning."
"What is the news the wire-borne voices send,
Fear on fear and a rumour of the end,
Civilisation's doom and hope's rejection ?"
"No, but the Resurrection !"

I. Sutherland Groom.

TO A STUDENT I DO NOT KNOW

(R.H., at the request of C.P.)

NOW, ride my thoughts upon your lips
Down leafy lanes in Spring;
Here is a score of music words
Our dales must hear you sing.

Use me and make your happy voice
A rising river's song,
Racing my words away to sea
To right politic wrong.

Break me on shores of selfish ease
Where fools think poet minds
Are moaning noises in a night
Or leaves blown on the winds.

The world yearns for the sweetness of
Your voice and lips and words
To grace the new morning's wonder,
Like songs of singing birds.

Sing loud, the sun behind the clouds
Carves edges gold 'till day
Comes dancing over hill and dale
And war is fled away.

Trooper, R.A.C. JOHN T. KIRK.

FRANCE

THE forms of thy past years go slowly by
Each one a glory shining from afar,
Across wide waters burning like a star
Through the deep dark of vast space where they lie;
The shades of thy lost years, O land of high
Tree-shadowed mountains, land where rivers flow
Majestic through long plains where black vines grow,
Land of the southern sun and hot blue sky.
Once Roland held the great hills scorning death
Killed on a lonely summit for this land
The last of a bright band of fearless knights,
O may again that soul of fire draw breath
To spread from mountains to the far sea strand
Courage that blazed on Ronceval's wild heights.

W.R.N.S. DIANA MOMBER.

LAMENT

ASWEEP the shore in weary drift,
Awash from the vagrant tides,
The spindrift and the flotsam lie;
Keening winds and ruesome sky
Shrive the lonely heart of me.

Drear the waters as they roll,
Wide the sombre of the sky,
Drains the colour from my soul
Now my love is gone from me.

Where the reedy sand-grass blows,
And the sea-birds plaintive cry,
Seek I here a bitter peace;
Waste of sand and bale of sky
Shrive the lonely heart of me.

Vast the waters as they roll,
Dread the eerie of the sky,
Deep the grief-wells of my soul
Now my love is gone from me.

Fall the black folds of the night,
Boom the bitterns of the storm,
Surge the floodsprings of the main;
Lash of wind and sea and rain
Shrive the bursting heart of me.

Wild the waters as they roll,
Dire the menace of the sky,
Burns the death-fire in my soul
Since my love is lost to me.

P. E. LEAVER.

HIS EXCELLENCY D. CACLAMANOS sends us a poem on PINDUS by a talented young Greek poet, George Mitsides, who writes in Greek as well as in English:

The ranges of Pindus, where
Greece has come to bear
The foe's fury and might
And has erected trophies bright;
The ranges of Pindus
Are now a single grave,
Where rest the glorious brave.

For Liberty's glory sake,
In its light all wake,
Their youth's flower offered to death
For mankind's rebirth.

CAPTAIN, A HALT IS CALLED

WE have halted by the wayside at this implicit moment,
knowing most of the fears and faults of history,
the long unending chain, light as gossamer, unreal
as dawn attack, binding as soldier's loyalties.

We have put off the pack of childhood,
lifted our eyes to a fiercer sun for god;
we have mastered the ambiguities and the loneliness
of little rooms to which no daylight comes.
We are even learning to love.

The simple, human, common things have power
to wring, to light our hearts.

Commissioned we are daily going forward,
our hearts are heavy, but the mind is glad,
released from weariness which weights our comrades,
fear of the past, pain we misunderstood.

Bayonet-wrenching our bellies is knowledge of suffering;
earth the uneven has turned in the womb, but has taught
the common death from which we do not turn.

And now the sleep of death is no more party
to the old, ageless subtleties of life.

Let us strike the match of the implicit moment.
Let us lighten implicit darkness.
Let love universal, not stirring
the tenor of thought by reckless giving,
turn from the dear Papa to exaltation
of outward living with laughter.

Let us soar to the top of our bent, and knowing
childhood's fancies and the truth historical
pluck the giant's beard. As David
let us take stone for mascot.

Come, brother, let us lighten the load of the weary;
with head held high march with a soldier's tread
and, not fearing, not returning,
know living as music and life a violin
into whose gentle and eternal voice
even the player's transmuted.

ALAN ROOK.

TO MARTIN

LAST LEAVE

GO forth then, Son, but take
Bereaved hearts to make
A shield
With love annealed.

Take hope, take more than love,
Lest these for us should prove
Too weak
Who mercy seek,

Even at War's fierce hand,
To spring in desert sand
A flower
That mocks the hour.

War, like a plucking tide,
Snatches you from our side
To go
Where none may know

But those whose vast design
Recks not of me or mine—
To swerve
For quivering nerve

Bare to the pang of love ;
Who, pitiful above
Compassion,
With blood re-fashion

Man's destiny anew
With their brave retinue
Of youth,
Daring no ruth.

O, Youth, your untired eyes
Covet no sordid prize,
For gain
Slayer nor slain ;

Sufficing you each day
That it be grimly gay,
And sleep
Unbroken, deep.

. . .

Heed not whom Death shall choose,
He is not mortal whose
Victory
Shapes destiny—

Not to mere sovereignty
Nor transient empery,
But even
To Immortal Heaven.

For beneath Man's pallid brow
Has bored a worm that now,
Full fed,
Rears serpent's head ;

Whose fangs in fury dart
Black venom to the heart,
Its breath
The reek of death ;

Its strangling coils intent
To fold the firmament—
To bind
With hatred, Mind.

Your task will not be done
Only with tank and gun—
Who quell
Embattled Hell,

For you shall carry light
Into satanic night—
With new stars
Eclipse red Mars ;

By Star of Bethlehem
Touch Christ's victorious hem
At last,
And hold it fast.

Would I could spur my flesh,
Gather up strength afresh,
Go
Where you must go,

And by no jot evade
The price that must be paid
For sloth
While God grew wroth

At duty shirked—for peace
Lost like a golden fleece
That Men
Must seek again

Through seas that Jason cleaved,
Men that our love conceived
Who brave
A sterile grave

To hail a dawning Age,
Or take, unearned, our wage
Of death
With even breath.

God will not close their eyes,
But open them, all-wise
To see
Our frailty;

And they in Paradise
Will grudge no sacrifice
That saved
A world enslaved,

Not by the Teuton horde,
But that more deadly sword—
Greed
Whence Christ's wounds bleed.

You knew your enemy
And mine lurked secretly—
Sin
Cherished within—

Grown, by our strength, obese,
Fed till the fruit of peace
Fell
To the pit of Hell

Whose kindled fury shows
Truth, lit with flames of rose,
Her face,
Barren of grace,

No longer hid, who now,
With minatory brow,
Pursues—
Cries, "I accuse,

"That, but by grace of God,
You might have forged the rod
Whose stroke
Man's conscience woke;

"That these daemonic men
Are but yourselves again,
Far sped
On ways *You* tread.

"That, with their last defeat,
You too must make retreat—
Seek
That awful peak,

"Stony, untrodden, steep,
Where the Immortals sleep—
Stars
Their bright familiars."

. . .

My Son, your spirit heard
That disregarded Word
Which saith,
"Love conquers death"

And tranquil, unafraid,
You went, who might have stayed,
Go, then,
And be with Men.

H. W. Harding.

TANK MADNESS

BETWEEN the old skies and the new skies,
between the old comforts and the new agonies
ahead,
there is a heaviness,
an unhealthy solitude,
as the smouldering storm
breaks in the thunder
of the beautiful, burdenous tanks
grieving past me here.
This vacant summer,
as I watch them pass me,
I do not grumble
at the unconquerable rattle,
as the necklaces of their tracks
relentlessly unfold,
at the tears of toil
I must call forth
for my unpeaceful lot.
Summer is a happy time.
Rather I complain
for the heavy lot
of all unsolid
fighting men.
Who said summer is a happy time ?
I must invoke a new God.
For ever
in the whispering moonlight,
and in the shrill sunlight,
there is an uneasiness,
a great heaviness
in my heart.

Lt., Guards. G. A. WAGNER.

GIFT

THIS softness in my heart is like a grace
That falling without warning in this place
Has loosened all the cords that held my soul
And set it swimming in a boundless bowl.
Moving among familiar things at hand
Externals shrink, internal worlds expand.
I am alone, alive. The softness flows
Over my being, and all conflict goes. S.W.

T. S. ELIOT AND THE LAY READER: IV
THE WASTE LAND, II

SO the motley takes the stage in the first scene with "A Game of Chess," in which the contrasts of the living red and white pieces are as striking as those of their ivory prototypes.

The scene is rich and lovely, intent with coloured sensuousness, which, as Mathiessen says, is reminiscent of Keat's enchanting power in Lamia or St. Agnes' Eve. But Shakespeare and Dante also hover about Eliot's moving pen:

> The barge she sat in like a burnished throne
> Burned on the water.

and Eliot writes:

> The chair she sat in like a burnished throne
> Glowed on the marble.

Metre in the first one hundred-and-ten lines is regular, in itself creating a soothing monotony in which luxury as the dominating note languishes without mental effort; thus Eliot blends sound and sight to accomplish atmosphere.

It is so noticeable throughout life, that two things create a third, day and night—time; two parents—a child; goodness and freedom—unity. Through the patterns of his poetry Eliot expresses the idea of a trinity. In different ways all great writers do this, chief among them, those of the Bible. Tagore and Santayana from almost opposite poles indicate that the combination of two forms establishes a third further form of abstract conjure. Tagore gives a clear example, "There is a bond of harmony between our two eyes, which makes them act in unison." We could enlarge this by saying they give us a third perception of visual capacity beyond the scope of either eye used independently.

Santayana describes the "nunc stans" (now abiding) in "There is no contribution of experience that need be excluded from recollection, but the new total at each moment forms a new object, caught in a new intuition." This is what Eliot means when he speaks of the "co-related objective," and it is of paramount importance that this vital key is fully understood in its application to his work.

We have studied the dual direction of Eliot's thought, balanced in equal strength; we have further found that his musical sentences balance at the central point; we now see the same poise in its application to form. That is, two ideas, if closely related, create an apex, a new further idea, which is the balanced centre.

Like a crystal cut in hexakis-octahedron, the pattern of one forms the side of another. The atmosphere of the room staged for "The Game of Chess" with its jewels, ivory, pungent scents and firelight flickering in orange and green, "from sea-wood fed with copper," has the further

facet of its owner. So another pattern is involved with the first; one of hysteria and consequent fear of anything not understood; an artificial standard of hypocrisy which recalls Dante's Friars from the Sixth Gulf, chanting:

> Our bonnets gleaming bright with orange hue
> are so leaden gross.

So Eliot works steadily towards the truth of the poem—"the withered stumps of time, which are told upon the wall."

Thus time records us and time brings our totality up to the eternal present the nunc stans.

With the impetuous action of the woman brushing her hair into fiery points, like the head of a Medusa, comes the expression of reckless defeat, followed in her conversation with her male companion. She uses darting observations, in keeping with the macabre sophistries of a Madam Sosostris. Then comes the odd double attack of her male companion, the White Knight, "I think we are in rats alley, where the dead men lost their bones." The precision and deadliness of the three-cornered checkmate permits no escape:

> What do we ever do?
> The hot water at ten
> And if it rains, a closed car at four.
> And we shall play a game of chess,
> Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

It points to the same routine, the same monotony, the same people going round in circles, the same conclusions to unreal reality until death knocks upon the door.

In a rather quicker vein, kept up to speed by the barman's constant reminder of "Hurry up please, its time" the white pieces move on the board. It is a perfect cockney setting and makes a brilliant surprise contrast to the previous game played in a setting of wealth. Though staged differently the underlying theme is the same: Unwanted children, instead of hot water at ten; Sunday ham, in place of a closed car at four; the same routine, monotony and purposeless living. "I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring." And the Upanishads say: "Man becomes true if in this life he can apprehend God; if not, it is the greatest calamity." Perhaps Eliot saw calamity stalking Europe after the last war, perhaps he too "perceived the scene and foretold the rest."

THE FIRE SERMON

> The river's tent is broken; the last fingers of leaf
> Clutch and sink into the wet bank.

Arthur Rackham drew trees as human people; Dante wrote of human souls imprisoned in them; and Eliot found a related objective from the

same source. By taking the hand and arm as the leaf and stem, he has related the reader intimately with the "last fingers of leaf which clutch and sink into the wet bank." We feel moisture as our fingers thread down into rich wet mould; our hands have become leaves; we are related so closely that falling leaves are no longer a statement or photograph, but an intense personal experience.

Having got his reader as a part of the poem, Eliot goes off to fetch Spencer and his "Prothalamion" to compare what happens now with what happened in his day, when the "Sweete Themmes ranne so softly." Nymphs are become modern girls out with directors' sons; other characters follow in Sweeney and Mrs. Porter, the Smyrna merchant and his week-end at the Metropole, the typist, the clerk, Elizabeth and Leicester, to the great tide of male and female of all ages from Carthage to Highbury.

The activities of all these people are watched by the aged Tiresias, whom legend says, because he struck a coiled male and female snake, was turned into a woman until he struck the same snakes seven years later. Tiresias (also enduring other punishments) used as a medium for the poem has the advantage of a dual knowledge of sex. He knew their type and the quality of expressing themselves. His three hundred years of life experience found no fundamental variation except in background:

> I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
> Perceived the same, and foretold the rest—
> I too waited the expected guest.

Behind this ability to see humanity as it really is, lurks Eliot's wayward humour. It scrambled out in "Prufrock," and very much later in "Old Possum." It is still just round the corner in "The Waste Land":

> A noise of horns and hunting, which shall bring
> Acteon to Diana in the spring.

And then:—

> The sounds of horns and motors which shall bring
> Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring,

followed by further fun about lavish Mrs. Porter and her daughter washing their feet in soda-water! There is a neat reference to the pocketful of currants, and finally, the absurd silk hat on a Bradford millionaire. All are playful jibes at human fraility.

"The Fire Sermon" starts in free verse, pastoral style, adopting a direct link with Prothalamion in the refrain—"Sweete Themmes, runne softly till I end my song." With the nightingale's interruption, free verse turns into regular rhythm, the rhythm of the modern, western mtchanical world of taxies, typewriters and food in tins:

And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
Enacted on this same divan or bed;
I who sat by Thebes below the wall
And walked amongst the lowest of the dead.

Life moves on for Eliot, in the past and in the present, with the future contained in them. Mechanism and modern conveniences have not altered the direction of human desire or activity;

In "Death by Water," the conclusions are very precisely made, though the poem is concise it gains rather than loses in dramatic force. The Wheel of Fortune already introduced by Madam Sosostris, links the East with the West, without distinction of race or religion in the final count.

E. M. STEPHENSON.

References in GAME OF CHESS

Page 64, line 92: Laquearia.

"dependent lychni laquearibus, etc.;"

The lighted torches hang from the golden panel of the ceilings, and the waxen lights outvie the night's darkness with their flames.

THE FIRE SERMON

Ovid (Juno): She demures; they decide to ascertain the opinion of Tiresias to whom love was known in two-fold guise. For he had lashed with his stick the twin bodies of two snakes cohering in the green wood; so transformed from a man, as a woman he had passed seven years. A marvel! In the eighth year he saw the same reptiles again, exclaiming: "If such is the power of your wile that it changes the lot of a Being to its opposite, I will strike you now." Striking the same snakes, his former shape came back and his innate appearance.

So this judge chosen on a jestful dispute confirms the words of Jupiter; but Juno is said to have grieved beyond her right and not in fairness to the subject and to have damned with endless darkness the eyesight of her critic, Tiresias. But the All-powerful Father (for no God may render useless the actions of a God) in place of Light, thus robbed him, granted Tiresias the power of prophecy and so mitigated his punishment by this award.

Page 72, line 293:

"Remember me, who am Pia
Siena made me, Maremma undid me."

The Buddha's Fire Sermon:

What Warren called the Fire Sermon is an extract from the Matravagga, which is the first and largest section of the Pali version of the Buddhist Vinaya, the canonical text of rules for monks. In expounding the rules, accounts are given of the occasions when they were annunciated by Buddha Vinaya-Pitaka, Matravagga, 1, 21.

Then the Blessed One, having dwelt in Uruvela as long as he wished, proceeded on his wanderings in the direction of Gaya Head, accompanied by a great congregation of "priests" (monks or almsmen), a thousand in number, who had all of them aforetime been monks with matted hair (Jatila, a class of ascetics).

And there in Gaya, on Gaya Head, the Blessed One dwelt, together with the thousand "priests." And there the Blessed One addressed the priests.

VINAYA-PITAKA

Translated by T. W. Rhys Davids and Harman Oldenberg.
(Sacred books of the East, Vol. XIII).

And the Blessed One, after having dwelt at Uravela as long as he thought fit, went forth to Gayasisa, accompanied by a great number of Bhikkhus, by one thousand Bhikkhus who all had been Jatilas (a class of ascetics) before. There, near Gaya, at Gayasisa, the Blessed One dwelt together with those thousand Bhikkhus.

There the Blessed One thus addressed the Bihkkhus :

Everything, O Bhikkhus, is burning.
And how O Bhikkhus, is everything burning ?
The eye, O Bhikkhus, is burning ; visible things are burning ;
the mental impressions based on the eye are burning ; the
contact of the eye (with visible things) is burning ; the
sensation produced by contact of the eye (with visible
things) be it pleasant, be it painful, be it neither
pleasant or painful, that also is burning.
With what fire is it burning ?
I declare unto you that it is burning with the fire of
lust, with the fire of anger, with the fire of ignorance ;
it is burning with (the anxieties) of birth, decay, death,
grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair.
The ear is burning, sounds are burning, etc. . . .
The tongue is burning, tastes are burning, etc. . . .
The body is burning, objects of contact are burning, etc. . . .
The mind is burning, thoughts are burning, etc. . . .

Considering this, O Bhikkhus, a disciple learned in (the scriptures) walking in the Noble Path, becomes weary of the eye, weary of visible things, weary of the mental impressions based on the eye, weary of the contact of the eye (with visible things), weary also of the sensation produced by the contact of the eye (with visible things) be it pleasant, be it painful, be it neither pleasant or painful. He becomes weary of the ear (repeat . . down to thoughts).

Becoming weary of all that, he divests himself of passion ; by absence of passion he is made free ; when he is free he becomes aware that he is free ; and he realizes that re-birth is exhausted ; that holiness is completed ; that duty is fulfilled ; and that there is no further return to this world."

When this exposition was propounded, the minds of those thousand Bhikkhus became free from attachment to the world, and were released from Asavas (*i.e.*, Infinities' passions).

Here ends the sermon on The Burning.

[*By the kind contribution of Professor F. W. Thomas (Oxon)*].

The Favil Press have just published a volume by Livia Laurent under the simple title, *Poems*. The title, taken as a description of the contents, is just, for the book contains a collection wherein poetry, for all the modernism of the talented authoress, has not been ignored. Indeed, it has been sought, appreciated and achieved in a sufficiently varied and individual manner to make reading this volume a matter of both pleasure and profit. Some of the poems have already appeared in print and well deserve reprinting, but many were new to us and we are glad they are so no longer.

In conveying the shadowy fears and discontents of the mind Miss Laurent has real mastery. She practises her art with a nice economy of words, just sufficient to

sketch for the reader the fleeting emotional picture she has in her own mind. At the other extreme she shows a real capacity for verse of a lighter strain wherein a close but good-natured observation unerringly detects the ridiculous in life. She is an impressionist with form, a modernist with music, an introspective with an objective whimsicality and all-in-all someone to watch in the future. We recommend *Poems*. It is full of them.

The inclusion of Pope's mocking epic, *The Rape of the Lock*, graphically edited by Geoffrey Tillotson, in Methuen's English Classics, has been followed by the more ancient and yet much more modern *Rape of the Locks* (Allen and Unwin, 5s.), in which the distinguished classical-modernist poet-philospoher, Gilbert Murray, O.M., presents a fragment of one of the few fragmentary plays that have come to light of the century written by Menander, the most famous representative of the "New Comedy" two thousand two hundred years ago, the Hellenic inventor of polite and artificial comedy in contrast to the gods and goddesses, the myths and the ritual of the older Euripides and Cratinus and the earlier Greek drama. Prof. Murray has done more than translate a fragment of the *Perikeiromene:* he has filled in by conjecture and happy invention the gaps in the papyrus and made a complete play of brisk dialogue and lively argument in which the old-time chorus has no part. The play develops a timeless beauty, more static if less modern in flavour than Mr. Arthur Way's lively versions of the earlier Aristophanes, while expressing conceptions beyond our present-day heroics and innumerable cenotaphs as in the reference to:

> Our good Greek rule about the trophies raised
> To mark a victory. Never must that mark
> Be wrought of marble or enduring bronze
> To make eternal boast; just a frail cross
> In armour, never tended or repaired
> Till in due time it falls, and the grass grows
> Above it and new blossoms greet the spring,
> And men forget a trophy once was there,
> And what it meant, and all the evil done
> By man on man. Only barbarians make
> Those records hard, of everlasting stone,
> Like their own hearts.

* * *

The *Glasgow Herald*, commenting on the R.A.P. proposals: "A correspondent of THE POETRY REVIEW, writing in the current issue, remarks on the fact that while there are at least eleven different 'degrees' or 'letters after one's name' which confer some status on the artist there are no labels by which poets may be recognised.

No doubt this is as well. Poets themselves have not displayed much anxiety about labels in their craft, and it is better for poets in general that there should be no branding. While it would be very pleasant to be nominated by some poetry academy as first chop it might be mortifying to be placed in the second class if one had backed one's chances to be ranked among the near immortals.

O.P. might convey some distinction on those thus admitted to the Order of Parnassus, but O.P.L.S. would be hardly so well received by leading exponents of the third rank. To belong to the Order of Parnassus Lower Slopes is as near to being an insult as it is a compliment. 'Call me poet or call me nothing' a celebrated practitioner once said, or words to that effect. Modern versification being what is it there is a strong case to be argued for silence, and no labels."

TO THE EDITOR.

THE R.A.P. PROPOSALS

I am obliged to you for sending me the papers relating to the R.A.P. proposals, and I am interested to learn the nature of the suggestion. I understand it is that there should be a Royal Academy of Poetry, charged with the functions of publishing annually a book of selected verse : and with certificating poetry according to its merit. In the first particular it would resemble the Royal Academy of Arts. In the second, it is not so easy to find a simile. There is, however, an encouraging one in the Government analysts, who certify the purity of milk, drugs, etc. It cannot be said therefore that in either function the new Academy would be without precedent. Before, however, deciding that these functions could be discharged with success, there are no doubt certain aspects of the matter to be taken into account, which are perhaps peculiar to poetry.

It is in exceptional cases only that one, whose duty it is to decide whether an object submitted to him is, or is not, a picture, can have any reasonable doubt. A picture is a flat object covered with marks, and it is identified by these characteristics. With poetry, this essential preliminary question admits of no answer of comparable certainty. Any page of print admits the widest conjecture as to whether it is poetry or prose. At one time it might have been held with moderate certitude that if lines of print or writing were of uneven length they were not prose. But now the application of that test would not afford any absolute protection against error. The absence of rhyme has never been a safe guide. I fear painful dissensions must arise amongst the Academicians in determining even what entries should be admitted to judgment.

There are some such preliminaries also for consideration as to the second function, that of certification. The success of the able officials who standardise for us such objects as food, electrical apparatus, scientific instruments, including clinical thermometers, and beer, depends, I believe, largely on accurate measurements : and for the purpose of those measurements it has been found necessary to establish units of the quantities to be measured. Thus for electricity we have the ohm, the watt, the ampere, and even the farad. Can this initial task be undertaken with success for poetry ? It may well be that it is not beyond the powers of the expert : but whether it is so or not seems to need consideration. It may be thought possible that there should be agreement amongst them about the quantities to be measured, such as beauty, truth, majesty, music, and others of the like nature ; and that units of these could be defined, to be given such names as the Shake, the Cowp, the Milt, and the Swin. Again, it may not. For instance, the name proposed for the unit of majesty would probably not secure the assent of Dr. Leavis. The possibility shows the need for careful preliminary examination of the tasks involved. I am glad that they are receiving it in our REVIEW.

House of Lords, 10-2-43. KENNET.

A NEW INTERPRETATION OF COLERIDGE'S "KUBLA KHAN"

As a result of recent study of the poem I have made some more remarkable discoveries about it, and can now carry much farther my thesis of twenty years ago, as propounded in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 9th March, 1922, that "The poem transcendently displays the effect of such experience (his short stay in Aloadine's 'Paradise') upon the life of one of the dupes."

In the same article I had shown that the source of the poem was *Purchas his Pilgrimes*, which work Coleridge was reading when he fell asleep and dreamt the poem. He had finished the Aloadine chapter and continued reading for about twenty more pages, the final words being, as he says in his foreword to the poem:

> Here the Khan Kubla commanded
> a palace to be built, and a stately
> garden thereunto: and thus ten
> miles of fertile ground were
> enclosed with a wall.

The poem starts:

> In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
> A stately pleasure-dome decree:

The first line is concerned with Kubla Khan. The second line is in the transition stage between Kubla Khan and Aloadine, "stately" and "decree" relating to Kubla Khan (for they befit the great emperor and would be out of place regarding the petty chieftain), but "pleasure" hints at Aloadine, for it is derived from the Pilgrimes statement that Aloadine provided "palaces and *houses of pleasure*" for his dupes. Had Kubla been in the poet's mind all the time, it seems the second line might have appeared as "A palace of delight decree," for a few seconds before he fell asleep he read regarding Kubla "there is a *palace* in which the Great Khan *delights*."

All the rest of the poem (with which it is assumed the reader is familiar) save for the last two lines of Part 2, undoubtedly relates to Aloadine ("The Old Man of the Mountain") and his Paradise at Mulehet in Persia, the poet's uncontrolled, sleeping mental activities having fully reverted by the end of the second line to the story of Aloadine.

It is submitted that the whole poem is supposed to be spoken by a notable man, who no more developed a martial spirit as the result of his paradisaical experience than did Coleridge after his three months in the army. On the contrary, his outlook became deeply religious, as witness "measureless to man" (in which he draws a distinction between man and denizens of the nether world) and "close your eyes with holy dread."

Coleridge had just read that Aloadine was head of a militant religious sect, and that he practised his deception upon young men, who were "daily instructed touching Mahammed's paradise." so the speaker of the poem will be referred to from now on as "the disciple," for it says that the fact that he was to be favoured with a stay in paradise as an inducement to him to fight for his faith (but primarily for Aloadine) was withheld from him.

Although, according to the Pilgrimes, ten or twelve young men at a time were put through the process, during which they occupied "divers chambers of the said palaces" and there were, necessarily, a corresponding number of damsels, Coleridge confines himself, in his poem, to the story of the one young man and damsel, and for all the poem tells us, the others might not have been there.

Aloadine relied chiefly on the sensualities of his paradise to allure the youths, and doubtlessly succeeded in the great majority of cases, but the disciple was one of his failures. He says nothing of the "meats and excellent drinks" and as regards the damsel, merely mentions her singing and playing; herself he remembered (as we shall see) with dislike. He found pleasure in vocal and instrumental music ("her

symphony and song") and in the music of nature ("the mingled measure from the fountain and the caves"); in architecture and scenery; in short, he delighted in the esthetic pleasures that would have given the poet himself the greatest joy.

That the incident is being related some years after its occurrence, and at a distance from Mulehet, is proved by the first eleven lines, which constitute Part 1 of the poem, in which all is in the past tense, as "there *were* gardens bright"—signifying they were no longer in existence, for Coleridge had read that Khan Ulau, in the year 1262, destroyed the "strong castle" and paradise, after a three years' siege.

The poem is in four parts, and Coleridge had it printed accordingly. The first part describes the general scene of the piece and states it was prepared to the order of Kubla Khan—for whom please substitute Aloadine as aforesaid. The second part recounts the particular spot where the damsel awaited the disciple's first appearance in paradise and where they met on subsequent occasions. The third, a mere six lines, fixes the position of the "dome of pleasure" in which apartments were assigned to the disciple. Thus, the first three parts of the poem are merely the setting for the drama of the fourth part, save for the eloquent first five lines of the second part, which, as I will explain, are the acme of the drama itself; the storm that was to leave a life-long effect. They start "But Oh!" which fervent exclamation is evoked by feelings stirred by remembrance of all that occurred in the spot he is about to describe. Had it not been for these intense personal associations, the poet would not have inserted the dramatic ejaculation:

> But oh! that deep *romantic* chasm which slanted
> Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
> A *savage* place! as *holy* and *enchanted*
> As e'er beneath a waning moon was *haunted*
> By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

Each word in these five lines, it will be seen, "speaks a volume," and without the initial exclamation, and the five adjectives all would be, and has been till now, guesswork. The five are in such curious juxtaposition, considering they are conflicting terms, that this theory is *necessary* for their elucidation and justification. Further, with its help, it will be found they (in conjunction with the exclamation "But Oh!") form a perfect word-picture of a whirlwind of emotions, and that

> —not a word is there that one would banish
> For fear the wonder of the whole should vanish.

Without its help, the five adjectives cannot be applied to the same spot, logically, for romantic scenery is wooded, and savage bare (as a general rule); a romantic place is not a holy place; savage is opposed to holy; holy (or under divine influence) is opposed to enchanted (or under the influence of magic); haunted (or frequented by one or more unholy things, *e.g.*, "a demon lover") is opposed to holy.

The fourth and final part of the poem is the drama to which the former passages have been leading; concluding with the lament of the exile from Paradise, as expressed in the final six lines.

Thus, the progress of the poem is perfectly orderly, and it may be considered as a finished production, notwithstanding that Coleridge describes it as "A Fragment." If, as he states in his Foreword, he composed a further two hundred or more lines, I suggest they were on a subject other than Aloadine (possibly, on Kubla Khan), for it seems he knew he had no clue to the occult poem, and so, year after year, with exemplary patience, refrained from publishing it as an enigma (a succession of "images") in the hope of penetrating some day the cryptic design of the jewel in which scintillated his verbal gems, and of thus giving it the added value of purpose. But it was not to

be, so, after nineteen years, it was printed with an explanation of its origin—but not of its meaning, for that had eluded him.

From the first five lines of Part 4, we learn that what we have read hitherto as an impersonal description, has actually been spoken by the disciple, who relates, now, that he had a vision, and in it saw a damsel and heard her sing a song to her own accompaniment on the dulcimer. But there was more in it than that. What actually happened we can reconstruct from the five adjectives in the first five lines of Part 2, in which the disciple *speaking allegorically,* while apparently describing the chasm, is, in reality, narrating his adventures there, as follows:

The damsel was told of his coming and ordered to await him in the "chasm." She sang meanwhile, so that, while emerging slowly from the drug, he should hear, as well as see, her. He thought it all a dream, and woke to find it true. He was enraptured with her music, and when she made love to him, as was her duty, and undoubtedly her pleasure, the callow youth responded to her blandishments. There was romance in a "romantic" setting; his first love affair, and he was "enchanted." But the damsel was of far too erotic a nature to retain her hold over the devout and esthetic young man for long, and that phase having quickly passed, the song which helped her to capture his fancy, he now derides as a "wail" and asserts that, instead of with a man, she was more fitted to consort with a satyr, and the spot among the cedars has suitably become "savage" and "haunted" (as in Tamarlane ii, 1, "The *savage brute* that *haunts* in *woods* remote"). Finally, he has vowed to devote himself to Mahammed, but not as a fighting-man. He has "seen the light," hence, the spot is "holy."

> For, till the maid he met, his life had been
> A sky unclouded in a dawn serene,
> That from a world of darkness went its way
> To seek the truth in the pure light of day.

This is confirmed by the injunction to his listeners "Close your eyes with *holy dread,*" for he would have them show similar reverence to his own for his religion.

In lines 6-12 of Part 4, he says that could he recall the damsel's song it would give him such joy that he would bring forth potent music that would thrill his hearers, until, in their rapture, they would imaginarily see the airy dome of pleasure for themselves. But the final lines show that he knows now that he was drugged before entering "Paradise," and that he could not produce the wonderful music without the aid of the same ecstatic drink; for these lines are an account of what he knows would happen if he were again put into a trance by its means; instead of being listened to with wonder and delight as he recounted his dream-adventures, he would be looked upon as an example to be avoided, for he assumes his hearers would be aware of the means by which he obtained his condition of exaltation.

It is the story of grief for a lost paradise only regainable under conditions to which the conscience refuses consent.

Thus, "Kubla Khan" is a poetic drama (produced within a paraphrase of the Aloadine chapter in the Pilgrimes) the plot of which is Coleridge's own creation.

The protagonist of the drama is Coleridge himself, for undoubtedly he unconsciously identifies himself with the disillusioned young man who has been through Aloadine's proselyting process, and in so doing, he tells his own story in that of the disciple, for, by taking a drug, he revived within himself "her symphony and song," and then, with the music of his poetical genius, succeeded in rebuilding that "sunny dome" and all that goes with it, so that all who read the poem may "see it there." Yet, we all cry "Beware! Beware!" of "all the drowsy syrups of the world."

Hove, Feb. 1, 1943. HOWARD PARSONS.

THE TEXTURE OF POETRY

Not all present-day versifiers realise that primarily poetry is composed of three parts, subject-matter, metrical pattern, and texture, the last of these being perhaps that which influences us most. The subject of a poem is comparatively unimportant, everything and anything may prove material for the poet; the metrical pattern is vital only as the framework, but it is the texture, the smooth or the rough, the plain or embellished, the substance that is like fluid, or like a glimpse through some wonderful lense, that shows us the vision, gives us that sight which the poet has striven to impart.

Texture, therefore, is a very important thing, and the different substances in which poets clothe their inspiration are very diverse. There has been in every age a certain accepted style in which texture was fashioned, a feeling for ornamentation or plainness, for the stretching of the fabric to a thinness so that a metaphysical thought might glimmer through, or a thickening until the spirit of poetry was obscured by external covering.

And every age has had its rebels, those who walked in homespun, while their fellows wore silk, who poured their visions into earthen jars while the world admired spun glass. Wordsworth and Browning were but two, one with his corduroy ruralism, the other, an innovator of the ruggedly intricate manner. The Victorians were mainly weavers, the carefully patterned stuff of their poems being often very beautiful. Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" gives the impression of a long strip of narrow tapestry, and in Tennyson's poem, "Tears, Idle Tears," the lines have the subdued sheen of grey silk. The Imagists were responsible for introducing a new type of texture. Their work had the hard, clear-cut precision of cameos, and also the deadness, and their attempt to "lift" and preserve life as they found it, with no attempt at transmutation, resulted in a queer outcome, rather as if they had sought to keep the beauty of a rose by pressing it in a book; at its best their poetry suggests the art of the lapidary, rather than that of the poet.

Texture, therefore, being such an intensely personal matter, cannot be controlled in quite the same way as rhyme or subject. The outlook, the environment, the individuality of the poet, all contribute something to the way in which he expresses himself.

Some of the poetry of Edward Thomas brushes the mind with a sensation like the touch of summer grass and low-growing branches of trees; his is the texture of blown clouds, and the perception of small plants creeping over stones. The poetry of Walter de la Mare has an equal simplicity, but here the touch is deeper, a bird scudding in the twilight, rose thorns, a voice heard at night, become peculiarly sinister; always beneath the surface seems to lurk ill omen and a brooding suggestion of witchcraft; the stars and flowers seem but a veil. This double texture contributes largely to his charm. The earlier work of Edith Sitwell appears to me to combine the craft of the verbal jeweller with that of the stage electrician. Her poetry dazzles by its curious richness. She writes of the countryside, but of a countryside more reminiscent of "L'Apres-medi d'un Faune," as produced by Diaghileff, than the rural England that we all know. Her delight in the sensual is at times on a par with that of Oscar Wilde, her writing having the same air of half decadent, half exquisite voluptuousness. Her fabric is stiff with jewelled phrases, and aflicker with light and shade.

The lighting of the texture of poetry is interesting, all great work having a certain inward luminosity which gives the outward aspect a poignant vividness, and which can seldom be mistaken. Some poetry, noticeably that of Shelley, seems all light, as though the fabric had thinned until the very spirit of the poem shone out, scarcely confined by the textural covering. Commencing with the Georgian poets the trend has been away from closely woven substance, a looseness and fluidity of metre having reacted on the fabric of poetry, causing it to lose its rigidity and somewhat muffling

thickness. The Georgians wielded a hoe rather than a crewel needle, and the result was a pleasant naturalness, which, unfortunately, sometimes lapsed into mere hay-antics which were as bad as Wordsworth at his most grassy. Since then the movement has been for greater and still greater freedom of technique, bringing with it a fluidity of substance that has both advantages and disadvantages.

The poet might be holding in his hands a test-tube, through which his own vision shines with a cloudy light, and by the adjustment of this light, and his grasp, be seeking the clarification of an essence, so that all might see and understand. At present many of the test-tubes are sadly murky, the desire to be unconfined and to record the more subtle nuances of the subconscious being largely responsible for this. However, we have many young poets whose work combines an almost inhuman clarity of vision with a tenderness of expression that would not disgrace an Elizabethan. The texture of poetry has changed, it will always be changing, for it is only by change that art lives.

Bournemouth. ELLODE COLLINS.

THE ESSENCE OF POETRY

In the November-December issue of THE POETRY REVIEW I enjoyed reading the letters by Fred Barlow and Ernest J. Bryant and can agree with them. Like both these gentlemen I find it most difficult to understand many of the so-called poems by the present-day writers. I have always felt the essence of poetry is the telling of the poet's thoughts in the simplest language possible, avoiding long little-used words and trying at all times to please the senses of the reader, leaving a feeling of satisfaction, a warmth of heart as it were, placing him behind the words so that he adopts the very theme as his own. All lines I have enjoyed and remember are those which convey that feeling and they must tell a story and have rhyme and metre or I fail to appreciate them. With William Booth one feels this and more, a craving to read more from his able pen. He, to my mind, is a natural poet. If a writer wishes to live he must write for the people and not above their heads. So many of the younger writers attempt to air their wild thoughts in language which only expresses their own incompetency and panders to a few of their own immediate circle, who, being like themselves, but half educated, deem the linking together of long disjointed sentences, which are the poor expression of incitement, the mere declaration of their own silly thoughts. Looking back over sixty years of a hard life, full, however, of colour, I find the things which stand out foremost in a memory not yet impared or dulled by the paintbrush of old Father Time, are those which tell of simple things and doings. It is far better to have memories of these beautiful things of life than to attempt to conjure up from wild imagination words which convey nothing but a feeling of pity for the author, pity which would never have been born had not the writer been suffering some mental disturbance. Given no encouragement, these youths would sink into oblivion and the world perhaps gain something if they had been trained in useful walks of life. I realise I shall bring down a storm of condemnation on my head, but I have faith to believe there are others like me think the same. Might I be permitted to quote from one of my own poems a few lines appropos to this very point of view :

> "But should some words of mine deny to those who read the meaning they would convey, it would be better they were left unsaid or thrown for winds with them to play."

I can visionize some of the opposition getting very cross with me as they tear their long hair and rend their flowing ties, they no doubt will dash into a long verbal harangue in support of their so-called modern artistic form of expression. Then, trying to dismiss the "old fogie" as an egotistical humbug, they will sip their lemon

juice and wipe me off as Victorian. But let me tell them I am the proud father of four of their own generation and understand their minds better than they think.

I am certainly Victorian in many ways, and thank my stars for the fact, as during that period of history we lived and were able to enjoy life to the full, without the humbug of the last few years of educational teaching, which has instilled into the minds of the present generation an outlook which, to say the least, is far from healthy.

I only refer to the order of poets who, as both the gentlemen quoted above will no doubt agree with me, are hardly worthy of the inclusion in a publication such as either THE POETRY REVIEW or *Poetry of To-day*. Let us ask of these younger ones no mere slinging together of words, but that they write melody with that easy flow of thought which comes to the true poet. There must be genuine poetic impulse and true expression of the emotions, coupled with wise choice of words to convey a pleasing meaning which shall last long after the actual words themselves have been expunged from the reader's mind.

Let me offer a word of advice to all beginners. Never force poetry. If it is true poetry it will come flowing without effort and seemingly from without oneself.

Shepton Mallet, February 21st. WM. ANTHONY WICKHAM.

WHITHER POETRY?

I should like to reply to a letter by Mr. Fred Barlow in the November-December issue of THE POETRY REVIEW.

You cannot imagine what pleasure it gave me to read his unkind comments on my poem, "Unknown Country," because every word he wrote proved that the poem was a truthful one. He obviously does not know my country. When I say "my country," I mean neither more nor less than that—I mean Canada. Perhaps Mr. Barlow did not know that Vancouver, B.C., was in Canada. For his information B.C. is the most westerly province, lying between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. I should be pleased to know just what is so complicated in a simple description of a rather vast piece of terrain.

As a matter of fact I consider the poem a failure anyway, because no one can constrict Canada into a girdle of fourteen lines. If Mr. Barlow really wishes to understand what I am driving at he should read Bruce Hutchinson's book by the same name, *The Unknown Country*.

While I am in the mood I should like to rush to the defence of Mr. Reginald Akhurst, who was also on the receiving end of Mr. Barlow's remarks. Frankly, it is Mr. Barlow whom I don't understand. I couldn't find anything difficult in "Repentance." I agree with him in condemning some of the nonsense that calls itself poetry, but I do not agree that Mr. Akhurst's poem falls into this category. True poems are words welling up from a true emotion—and what could be more true or more feeling than the last line of Mr. Akhurst's poem, "Across the acres of his loneliness."

Vancouver, B.C., January 6th. DOROTHY TRAIL.

A POET OF THE NEW ERA

I was especially delighted with the two poems by Mr. Geoffrey Dobbs in No. 65 of *Poetry of To-day*. I have not forgotten a previous poem which was awarded the Premium and which was an indictment of the Hun, Germanic or of any nationality, who would reduce mankind with his New Orders to a drab uniformity. The charge was driven home with a lively vigour by an analogy with the bombing of London which aimed at reducing it to a featureless rubble. That failed and so will any attempt to deny the freedom of individuality to man although I hold, as no doubt Mr. Dobbs

does, that some of Man's freedoms, where they hurt the community, must be abolished. I have no copy of this poem but I still remember, who have no memory either, the swift music of his rhythms—"Level, Level, quoth the Devil, etc." Mr. Dobbs' level was a very high one.

Of the two poems in No. 65 I prefer "The Unknown Warriors—1936," but only because of two things one must be preferred. I like the objective scorn and the vigorous deliberation of both poems but, for me, the exposure of the essential gullibility and silliness of the public mind (pre-war ?) is a joy, if this is the appropriate word to use.

The second poem, "Mass-Production Man," supplies the reason, or most of it, why the first had to be written. Mr. Dobbs is perhaps a thought too pessimistic in his treatment of his theme. I am more hopeful but not by much and so I could forgive him infinitely more than this if he will write us more poems as good or even if he does not. He sees the truth intensely, paints it finely and fiercely and makes ugliness a trumpet for his muse which, when you come to think of it, is saying something.

Perhaps it says more for the authenticity of that trumpet note that Sir Archibald Southby, a Conservative Member of Parliament, should have been impelled to quote a passage from another of his clear-sighted poems in the House of Commons. There would appear to be at least one, even in the ranks of Tuscany, who can scarce forbear to cheer. Blow on Mr. Dobbs and louder.

Twickenham, February 15th. H. W. Harding.

ON "LITTLE GIDDING"

It is odd how obtuse one can be and how badly, at times, one's poetic sense can serve one.

I had read *Little Gidding* several times before realising the "key" appeal of "If you came this way."

My imagination had at once been gripped with the fantastic game of "hide-and-seek" which Mr. Eliot plays with his old, his other selves. It was like watching a woman intently examining her features in one of those winged mirrors ; pulling "faces" at it, coming to terrible conclusions. I had been breathless with interest, so that I missed for a time the intensity of the pleading, uttered—be it said in my defence, with the take-it-or-leave-it disinterestedness of the mystic to the world which will not look this way :

> If you came this way,
> . . . . . .
> If you came this way in may-time . . . .
> . . . . . .
> If you came at night . . . .
> If you came by day . . . .
> It would be the same . . . .

But what pleading ! A whole history of personal experience is at our disposal :

> And what you thought you came for
> Is only a shell, a husk of meaning
> From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled
> If at all. Either you had no purpose
> Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured
> And is altered in fulfilment.

The beginnings of contemplative prayer are here so well explored and economically expressed—a fluid experience is as neatly confined in words as an egg in a shell, that there is no more wastage than an echo makes ; and :

In the uncertain hour before the morning
Near the ending of interminable night
At the recurrent end of the unending
After the dark dove with the flickering tongue
Had passed below the horizon of his homing

Mr. Eliot describes the Anglican rite of Holy Communion with identical skill. It is pure poetry, perfectly satisfying. The heights and the depths are touched by "the dark dove" and "the horizon of his homing." The thought thrills, and stills, every time one calls it to mind. But "While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin," he "met one walking, loitering and hurried," and :

fixed upon the down-turned face
The pointed scrutiny with which we challenge
The first-met stranger in the waning dusk
I caught the sudden look of some dead master
. . . . . In the brown baked features
The eyes of a familiar compound ghost.
. . . . . .
What are *you* here ?
Although we were not. I was still the same,
Knowing myself yet being someone other
And he a face still forming :

Ghostly enough ! You can *see* the "brown baked features," the face of clay that had felt the fire. The first time I read these words somebody strolled, very slowly, over my grave

And so compliant to the common wind
Too strange to each other for misunderstanding
In concord at this intersection time
Of meeting nowhere, no before and after
We trod the pavement in a dead patrol.

It is the poignant meeting of the different selves

The wonder that I feel is easy,
Yet ease is cause of wonder . . . . .

But the talk of easiness merely serves to underline the tenseness of the atmosphere, and :

I am not eager to rehearse
My thought and theory which you have forgotten

strikes a sad and answering chord in us at once.

Since our concern was speech . . . . :

seems to me to be one of Mr. Eliot's neat lifebelts thrown out at the psychological moment. They leave me undecided as to whether it was he or I that was on the point of drowning ! He is certainly the more imperturbable of the two.

And speech impelled us
To purify the dialect of the tribe
And urge the mind to aftersight and foresight

—the urge, the bane, the unavoidable birthright of the poet to express the truth as he has seen it : an effort Mr. Eliot is never likely to shirk. If ever a man dug down to the very ground-floor of his thought, he does. I have even felt a slightly shamed weariness at times, at being dragged down with him willy-nilly, and have read him through in a quite "faculty-less" fashion before turning the unwilling handle of my mind.

To me there is a certain amount of contradiction in what follows :

To set a crown upon your life-time's effort—

I understand this, also grasp the significance of "expiring sense without enchantment," but when it comes to "as body and soul begin to fall asunder" I know I feel more sympathy with "bodies" than Mr. Eliot does : think them blessed, if very tiresome things : realise mine is mine, *not* by luck but by judgment.

The glance at humanity, his own included, is too cold, too acid for me. In my own opinion the first fallible judgment has not much in common with the detachment of which he later writes. The latter contains the quiet essence of experience, the open-eyed choice of the "better part." The former smacks a little of the "old Adam," over-fervent even in reformation.

He left me with a kind of valediction

—the perfectly expressed farewell of all such retrospective thought. There may have been a shade more tenderness than appears on the surface, otherwise "malediction" might have been a better word! After all the worst indictment of the "compound ghost" had been :

Of things ill-done, and done to others' harm
Which once you took for virtue,

and I cannot help feeling that Mr. Eliot cauterizes a wound which really has no business to exist; "Which once you took for virtue," is surely sufficient proof that the poison was always provided with an antidote.

. . . . . In the disfigured street
He left me . . . . .

is a grand sentence marked with haggardness, bitterness, sorrow.

One responds immediately in Part III to the change-over to hope and spring-time, recognising the very things that have "flourished in the same hedgerow." Poetically I enjoy :

Indifference
Which resembles the others as death resembles life
Being between two lives—unflowering, between
The live and the dead nettle.

but to my way of thinking the sanest kind of "indifference" is a floriferous thing. Mr. Eliot's is an austere creed, austerely recited. There will be those who think he wants to keep them in cold storage—and they will be wrong. It is to be "transfigured, in another pattern" that he is aiming, and the lines immediately following breathe the purest atmosphere of hope and wisdom, breathe it again and again. And what a magical line that is, "To summon the spectre of a Rose"! Cut, and dried—and magical!

There is no room to discuss the white-hot lyric of the pentecostal Flame, the Spirit in the Shape of a Dove, which is Part IV. It is the mystic's creed epitomised. It glitters on a background of darkness.

Then after the typical philosophy of Part V comes the gentle turning of the true contemplative :

With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling

Away flies one's mind to Julian of Norwich; to St. John of the Cross; the "Cloud of Unknowing"; the "Cloud of Forgetting." Time is drawn out to eternity—and by a single line! We glimpse the Truth at last, and "know the place for the first time."

When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning,

but seen with new-born eyes, when all the different kinds of death have been achieved ;

"When the fire and the rose are one."

It is a poem to read again and again. One has dipped into it, no more.

Some lines of Hazlitt occur to me, purely by way of contrast:

> "Would that I could go back to what I was then! Why can one not revive past times as one can revisit old places? . . . . . On my way back I had a sound in my ears—it was the voice of Fancy; I had a light before me—it was the face of Poetry."

It would be difficult to find a more complete and interesting dissimilarity of outlook. Hazlitt, who longed to "live that birthday of thought and romantic pleasure over again" and who loved "the bubbles that float upon the springtide of human life"; and Eliot, with his:

> Quick now, here, now, always—
> A condition of complete simplicity
> (Costing not less than everything)
> And all shall be well . . . . . .

Bognor Regis. JOSEPHINE CUTTS.

POETS AND CRITICS: A REPLY TO ALAN SCOTT

It happens that metaphor in argument or assertion does not always successfully carry thought to the desired end. When one comes across a statement to the effect that "expression breaks through the structure of language," especially as applied to poetry, it seems to be implied that the manner employed is one thing and the language itself is another; whereas the language constitutes the expression and the expression is the language. Francis Thompson, in his well-known essay on Shelley, made almost the same mis-statement when he said: "His thoughts scorch through all the folds of expression. His cloth of gold bursts at the flexures and shows the naked poetry."

Now, I take it, a metaphor may go beyond reality but it must not go against it. One cannot attach real meaning to this rhetoric. It would seem that the writer envisaged poetry as something apart from the language, which itself constitutes whatever poetry there may be; though words may embody thought it is only when expressed in particular language that thought becomes poetry.

To give Thompson his due, he probably meant that there were thoughts remaining unexpressed by Shelley and which perhaps could not be uttered; but the unuttered, or the unutterable, cannot be referred to as poetry, naked or otherwise.

And, "to break through the structure of language"! When the language is disrupted what have you left; when the language is gone the poem is gone. At the risk of tiresome repetition I affirm this. How can expression break through the structure of language? How does poetic expression function except by means of language? When you have stripped the petals from a rose, you cannot expect to find more than the rose, nor can you discover the poetry apart from the language; it does not become poetry until shown forth in the expressed word, and then its worth will depend on whether the expression is the work of a poet or is something of less value.

Would it not be well if some of our critics made up their minds as to what constitutes poetry and cease giving labels, often on slender pretexts to each succeeding coterie of writers as they come along. This might be all very well in fifty years' time when applied to such verse as may then have survived, but at the moment it only attaches undue importance to, or on the other hand, unduly decries the work of the writers thus classed.

Nearly everyone can produce verse of a kind, just as often, the identical people can produce painted pictures of a kind, and together with these is a section who take

upon themselves the office of criticising; the criterion for these often apparently consisting in unimportant likes or dislikes. However, one does sometimes feel inclined to ask wherein, in their opinion, lies the essential difference that makes poetry in the case of one verse, and what lack it is that in another causes failure.

Is there, in fact, any standard in assessing poetry and is the extravagant praise meted out on one occasion, or the unconvincing, because overdone denunciation on another, to be accepted at its face value?

Very pleasant therefore it is to read in the current number of THE POETRY REVIEW the outstanding article from the masterly hand of Mr. Stanton A. Coblentz; there, one may find with all the force of reasoned clarity, the assurance that well-accredited standards handed down by poets of undying repute, are not meaningless or worn out as our modern mentors would have us believe, and that the vital principles actuating poetry may still flourish under new forms in a new age.

Apart from the writers just previously referred to, there are others, themselves writers of poetry, who on occasion surprisingly evince what to me appear strange opinions. An example occurred in the Nov.-Dec. number of THE POETRY REVIEW, when Mr. Alan Scott replied to unfavourable comments on his short poem, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way."

I think it a pity that he undertook any defence of this poem, it can take care of itself and I do not offer any criticism of it; it is with his refutation of this criticism I am concerned. With some of what he says in these few lines I am so out of agreement that I yield to the temptation to state my own view.

He speaks of the "green of flowers and the green of gangrene"—"They are each a product of Nature and to me appear equally green. Poets must see all." Equally green, yes, but the common quality of greenness does not give them the same value. The green of gangrene is that of a dead thing, the green of grass is that of life; this accidental similarity of colour alone cannot justify any further association of idea between them, though it can justify a dis-association of idea by way of contrast. But this further statement, "Poets must see all."

It is to be doubted whether this view of "poetic vision" as apparently put forward by him, does sufficiently agree with that ordinarily understood by the expression. He has mentioned in his poem certain things seen by him on the battlefield, usually regarded, to put it mildly, as unpleasant, and brought them to notice more bluntly than is usual in a work of poetry. Now if mere observance of these things required some special poetic insight they might properly be included in the phrase "Poets must see all": but these things referred to were plain to all and indeed, not to be eluded by any, and therefore to his "Poets must see all," I venture to add, yes, but they need not say all; they have discretion and choice at their command. It is not these appalling appearances that really count for very much, but it is the unspeakable loss involved in the whole pitiful business.

I hope Mr. Scott will believe that I am not trying to minimise these horrors, nor in any way detract from his poem. My object is to oppose a possible contention that by virtue of seeing something, or knowing something, a poet has necessarily justification for incorporating it in a poem; I do not think he necessarily has.

Thetford. RAYMUND BOURNE.

It is wonderful how you have been able to produce THE POETRY REVIEW in its attractive form during the trying years of war. And with many others I join in thanking you for the pleasure and inspiration it never fails to give.

Sheffield. EDITHA JENKINSON.

THE POETS' FELLOWSHIP

THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

Mr. W. R. Latham (Chingford) and Mr. Raymund Bourne (Thetford) are bracketted in the Premium Award for two outstanding poems.

Highly Commended

Vere Arnot, Walton-on-Thames ;
E. Barrett, Seaford ;
T. E. Casson, Ulverston ;
E. M. Fison, Oxford ;
H. W. Harding, Twickenham ;
M. H. Hill, Pangbourne ;
Nancy Pollok, Wolverhampton ;
F. M. Queminet, Rotherham ;
Mary Savidge, Bury St. Edmunds ;
Harry Sefton, Lytham ;
M. Smith, Nottingham ;
D. E. Christine Tomlin, Dunstable ;
Ronald Westbrook, Maidstone ;

Commended

Edith Birch, Bournemouth ;
Edgar Burdett, Ongar ;
E. D. Broster, Wirksworth ;
Violet Churchman, Woodbridge ;
Pauline Emeric, Taplow ;
Mary Evers, Oxford ;
Evelyn M. Finn, Honiton ;
Lira Gray, London, W. ;
Cyril Hughes, Liverpool ;
John Kennedy, Newport ;
G. E. Merrick, Warminster ;
W. H. Dennett-Morgan, Redhill ;
Henry Newcome, London, W. ;
G. S. Oddy, Ryde ;
Irene Ormsby, Thurgoland ;
T. Pittaway, Frome ;
Grace Dorothy Reeves, Reigate ;
K. M. Shawcross, Bromley ;
W. T. Shorthose, Mair, Staffs.
Hilda M. Slade, Worthing ;
Arthur Lynnford-Smith, Wanstead ;
Kay Toovey, Amersham ;
Gertrude Vaughan, St. Leonard's-on-Sea ;
Moira O'Callaghan Vawser, New Malden ;
Edith M. Walker, Bournemouth ;
Frederick F. Wilks, Salford ;
Mary E. Wise, Brecon ;

The usual premium offer for the best poem or poems submitted to the Premium Editor during the month (without limitation of subject) is continued. Not more than four lyrics or one long poem should be submitted. MSS. should reach "The Premium Editor, The Poetry Review, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," by April 1st, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope, and if criticism is desired, 2s. 6d. (For a more detailed postal criticism, 5s. should be sent). It is essential that entrants to this competition be members of The Poetry Society or registered subscribers to The Poetry Review, and that each poem bears the name and address of the author. (Entries received after the formal closing date are carried forward to the next adjudication).

Mary Isabel Somervell defines the Realist's Boast and the Critic's Answer :

"Realist I—
I rejoice in a flair
For the lewd and the crude
And in knowledge of cess-pool and slum
I can describe them
In language most blatent and crude
And their like 'neath the sun.
I who delve in them,
Dive in them,
Thrive in them.
I can write stuff—

That will scare you
And scar you
And rend you—and tear you and mar you.
Yes, you sure enough
Who make study of cold
And of old
Of already-told tales
Of a past that will crumble
And perish and vanish for ever
At last.
For the folly and farce
Of the Mystics
Will wither and shrivel
Like grass
And be shattered
And scattered abroad
Like a bomb-splintered glass."

"Vanish for ever ?
Not so. You are wrong ! You are wrong !
And I heed not and deafen my ears
To the words of your song.
I rejoice in a love of things old
And in manifold
Glories and wonders, unsung and untold.
Knowing well that the books
And the art of a world, in years myriad
Cannot express or contain
The heart-searching splendours of God
Nor foreshow, save in fraction
The holy white Strength of His Name."

JOAN EASTMAN (Henley) imagines the REFLECTIONS OF A LADY ON DISCOVERING HER FIRST GREY HAIR :

Oh horror, 'tis my first grey hair !
Unfeeling wretch, intruding thread,
What is your meaning lurking there
Art come to tell me youth is fled,
I soon a matron past repair
With hips beginning wide to spread
And skin all crinkled up with care
With baggy eye and bunion red ?

Vile mocking imp, I'll see you dead
For straight I'll pluck you from my head
And set a rose bud there instead.
Now say I'm thirty if you dare.

T. E. CASSON addresses SIR WILLIAM NORMAN BIRKETT, K.C., on his appointment as a justice of the High Court of Justice, King's Bench Division :

Birkett ! when from the sessions of old thought
I summon Memory, of the now-dead time

Recorder; and from the cell of night is brought
Conscience, a prisoner pallid but sublime:
Mnemosyne at the bar of equal Truth
Arraigns the deponent: "Thus and thus it fell,
In the high agony of aspiring youth,
To soar on the soul's wing to Sun's pinnacle
From the rich confines of the trafficking sea.
Hope pointed, and Faith beckon'd from the mount
Where Plato set the ever-starry Idee,
Justice, by fair Eunoe's shadowy fount.
Thither ascend, where Themis at your ear
Whispers, 'The Orb of immortal Light shines here!'"

Barbara Lea submits an Interim Report on Writing Poetry:

It will not be denied, the urgent voice:
Untrammelled, vast,
Eternity its parent, it has yet
No moment here to lose.

It will not be controlled, assessed, arranged
Between the needs
Of food and sleep. It will not wait, nor share,
Nor take the second place.

It will not be compelled. Though it remain
A day, a week,
It renders back an unrefusable
Unwanted sovranty.

Sudden it goes: and with it goes the light.
Unwillingly
Reason—forlorn, inadequate, ashamed—
Returns: to cry "Who spoke?"

J. R. Brocklebank, sending African Night (1943) from an R.A.F. Station, deplores the loss of the Friday meetings, and sincerely trusts that they will continue for always, so that when the time comes for his return to the freedom which this Service life prevents, he will be able to find again the comfort of inspiring thoughts and words that he once used to find in our peaceful rooms:

Musingly we saw the blacker night
Vie-ing the moon's surpassing light,
And felt the breeze about us stir
Sweeter than frankincense or myrrh,
Embodying a living, feeling peace!
All men were,
It seemed, in sleep. Tuned to the night's vast rest,
Each sensed the tumult quieten in each aching breast!
But, from afar, the silence of the heavens split asunder,
While we were yet drunk with the dreamy astral wonder,
And we heard the man-made engines thunder!

. . . . . And we deemed it odd that above, with base vindictive lead,
Flying men were striving to shoot each other dead!

W. B. YEATS AND SYMBOLISM

We have no space for a Tay Pay O'Connor type of review, which alone would do justice to Mr. Joseph Hone's 500-page biography of W. B. Yeats (Macmillan, 25s.). But in lieu of such treatment we may point out that the subject of this biography and all his works have been already comprehensively dealt with in THE POETRY REVIEW in the studies by his old-time friend and colleague, Mr. Hunt Grubb, whose articles were as thorough and voluminous as they were well-informed, and they, perhaps, do more justice to the genius of Yeats. For Mr. Hone has really very little to say about the character and poetry of his subject, whose life outside his poetry was not particularly interesting. We get in consequence a chronicle of very small and inconsequential events, not completely linked up or fully explained, in spite of the author's otherwise consistent lucidity.

Yeats' early association with Mather's Order of the Golden Dawn and his subsequent dealings with various mumbo-jumbo activities in pseudo-theosophy, cabalistic magic and hermetic pretensions do not really help our appreciation of the poetry of one whose actual fame does depend on his own magical mastery of the written word. The poet's fierce controversies over the Abbey Theatre, his political and national prejudices and his unfortunate association with his younger contemporaries in connection with the Oxford Book of Modern Verse are recorded at considerable length, but add nothing to what is already known and have little permanent value; perhaps they should be forgotten.

The core of Yeats is to be found in his attitude to poetry as illustrated in his treatment of Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound," "not as a myth infused with modern thought, as Goodwin's Political Justice put into verse, but as a poem, as a mysterious song setting its author beside Blake and other poets of mystical meanings, whose symbols are images transcending time and space and in a sense living souls," a poet who regarded poetry "as a positive truth and contrasted with the illusions of history and politics."

Actually the greatness of Yeats is better brought out in C. M. Bowra's *Heritage of Symbolism* (Macmillan, 15s.), the publication of which coincides with that of Mr. Hone's biography, in which Yeats is succinctly dealt with as the English protagonist of the modern and productive movement in European poetry between 1890 and 1939 (the year of Yeats' death), which started with the ideas of the French symbolists, the other leaders being Paul Valery in French, Alexander Blok in Russian, Rainer Maria Rilke and Stefan Georg in German. This is a most notable book. All who have a high regard for poetry should read it. It is particularly necessary to do so in these days, when even the practitioners of poetry disparage their high calling and appear to repudiate its essence, which is really what Mr. Bowra defines as symbolism, with "its insistence on a world of ideal beauty and its conviction that this is realised through art." Mr. Bowra finds Yeats' career "an instructive commentary on symbolist doctrine." He was well fitted to welcome it, and in it he found his first real style. Even when he was brought down to reality and abandoned his earlier manner, he was still to a large extent a symbolist; he still dealt with the subtle and intangible matters behind the immediately visible world; he still saw the artist as a superior being who is almost necessarily out of tune with his times. But what marks him off from other poets of his training is that through symbolism he found a way to create an extremely lively and concrete poetry about himself. He worked hard to rid his verse of all vagueness and looseness. What he lost in mystery he gained in power. To otherwise commonplace events he brought wonder and significance, a vitality and enjoyment which made them extraordinarily vivid and real. He attached great importance to the emotions, and since he himself was highly emotional and even pasionate, he tried, with consummate success, to make poetry of them. Even in his most abstract themes there is a great

intensity of feeling. He flung all of himself into his verse, till it contained the many qualities of his exuberant and abundant personality. At the one end is what takes place, "In a foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart," and the other the absolute satisfaction which he found when his faculties were freely at work :

So great a sweetness flows into the breast
We must laugh and we must sing
We are blest by everything
Everything we look upon is blest.

This is a very great conclusion, which could not possibly be drawn from Mr. Hone's chronicles, an affirmation of Yeats' proud, aristocratic, intolerant personality which hedged about his genius.

Mr. Bowra finishes his eloquent, penetrating individual studies with the compact statement that the successors of Mallarmé "have, on the whole, abandoned the search for pure poetry and found that in practice it is impossible to lay down what subjects are poetical and what are not. They have increased the amount of intelligible matter in their verse and have even condescended to argue and explain. They have not sought for the ideal page, for the silence more expressive than song. They accept the fact that words have meanings and that poetry must be understood. But they have nonetheless kept to the magical view of it. They aim at moving hearts and stirring imaginations. Even when they have become teachers like Georg or prophets like Blok, their messages are based on their conception of poetry. It is poetry which is to change the world, the spirit of song or music which is to create new societies. They have thus found a place for themselves and solved the discord which the original symbolists felt between themselves and the public. The poet, it is now felt, can do something that other men cannot do. He can give a special kind of life through his art ; he can show what things really mean in their associations and relations. Through the feelings and the imagination he creates an effect which science never can. The scientist is the mere expositor, the poet the man of action.

"The magical conception of poetry has taken different forms. When Henri Bremond said that poetry was like prayer, he touched on something near the truth about the post-symbolists. For not only is their poetry an incantation : it is based on the belief that the poet is in touch with a superior order of things and that his art is the ritual by which this is brought down to men. Rilke's theory of death and transformation, Georg's cult of Maximin, Blok's Spirit of Music, Yeats' spiritualism, are all attempts to make a religion out of the creative process which lies behind poetry, to find in its dynamic manifestations a power at work in the whole universe. Even Valery's acceptance of poetry as something unique and inexplicable and his unceasing surprise that such a thing can exist are an admission that there is a mystery somewhere."

Much more is said on this subject, but the reader must continue the study and development of Mr. Bowra's arguments for himself, up to his ultimate conclusion : "The moderns have invented a poetry of the commonplace. For their changed outlook they have found a modern style. In their realistic rhythms and everyday subjects they have moved a long way from the older generation which, with its religious or oracular view of art, cannot but keep an air of aloofness. It believed that it was different from other men and was proud to be so. The modern realists are the poets of the multitude. Their thoughts run on common topics and in common words. Once again poetry has had to change her character that she may keep her youth. Because these poets write about themselves, they are often and indeed usually subjective. The unity of a poem is secured not by a theme or setting but by the poet's mind, in which everything takes place. . . . ."

The symbolists and their successors set out with a clear view of what poetry ought to be. "They modified it greatly with the years and yet they still kept to some of its main tenets; its mystical grandeur, its aloofness, its element of music. By concentrating on these points they missed opportunities which later poets have seized, especially their creation of poetry from the most ordinary words and things which have since come to the fore. Their high standards of technique almost forbade any attempt to reduce the language of poetry to that of speech, or to use slang, except for some strange ulterior purpose, as Blok uses it in "The Twelve." If they condescend to this they still keep their distance. So too their respect for verbal harmony precluded them from the more staccato effects of modern verse. Even their occasional *vers libre* has its own dignity. Their plainest words have a noble and measured tread, a due respect for *la musique avant toute chose.*

Our critic's attempt to reconcile the symbolists with contemporary aspiration and effort is positive and encouraging. "The twentieth century has brought poets into touch with facts far more brutal than their immediate predecessors ever knew. But the greater the disaster, the greater the chance for the poet. Out of the blood and storm he has won glory. The post-symbolists have had the confidence to assert human values in the face of meaningless circumstance and to rise to a tragic grandeur. From the griefs and burdens of mankind they have extracted a noble exaltation. Despite their yearnings for other worlds, their feet were set on the solid earth. Their desire for transcendant orders of experience is no denial of the here and now. It bears no relation to Plato's distrust of the senses or the Christian antinomies of soul and body. Indeed, these mystical backgrounds give significance to life by relating its multiple phenomena to a single scheme. The ideal, remote and intangible, is known only through its sensible instances. These are what count. Even the poet's own joy in creation, which seems so unlike other activities, is intimately dependant on what his senses give him. His theories, his mystical exaltation, his sense of another, more real world, end paradoxically by making him attach more value to the sensations and appearances which constitute his daily life. They sharpen his insight and make him find charm and significance in much that others dismiss as trivial or fail altogether to notice. The claim of the post-symbolists is largely that their imaginative art has thrown a new enchanting light on themes which might seem stale and exhausted, and on quite familiar events. But they have done more than this. They have delved into the increased and complex consciousness of civilised man and found in it mysteries whose real nature can never be conveyed through the abstract methods of science, whose worth for human life can only be expressed through symbol or suggestion. They have proved that in *the modern world there is still a place for poetry,* because it does something that nothing else can do." This is a definite answer to a bewildering doubting question.

We welcome a novel anthology, *Wings,* compiled by H. G. Bryden (Faber, 8s. 6d.), in which the subject of flying is interestingly illustrated by quotations of prose and poem and oratory. We are grateful for the industry and erudition which went to the making of this comprehensive survey of what prophetic and imaginative minds have said about flight from quite remote times to the day before yesterday. Leonardo da Vinci to H. G. Wells describes it except for the well-chosen and beautiful quotations from the poets. Among these we are glad to see that fine poem by T. W. Ramsey, "Mercury." The volume is in thirteen sub-divisions, each devoted to an aspect of the history, development and use or abuse of this new accomplishment of mankind. The last and thirteenth section is entitled, "Wings of Peace." We trust superstition is dead.

THE ART OF SPEAKING AND READING VERSE

THE POETRY SOCIETY'S AUDITIONS

New members and readers are reminded that The Poetry Society (Incorporated) for above a third of a century has constituted the one active, practical English Verse-Speaking Association.

Its unique examinations in the art of reading and speaking verse were based on Lady Margaret Sackville's presidential address on the formation of the Society and on regulations drawn up in consultation with Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson and Sir Frank Benson, who themselves gave practical effect to them and put them into operation by acting as Examiners over several years. These authorities set the high standard insisted on by The Poetry Society and necessary to the development of the Society's objects and policy, and these principles have been observed and adhered to by their successors, who gained their practical experience by acting as assistants and understudies of these distinguished authorities on the application of elocution, voice-production and speech training to the art of self-expression through the voice and the attainment of a simpler, subtler, more exquisite and individual vocal interpretation of poetry.

The auditions held regularly in London and various provincial centres and many schools, have acquired a unique status and authority and influence, with the weight and prestige of the long established and incorporated Society behind them, securing a continuous policy, regular administration, and a high standard unaffected by personal vagaries, and giving legal and permanent distinction to the awards in contrast to the sporadic ephemeral imitations of private individuals and factious amateur concerns.

It should be noted particularly that these examinations in diction and verse-speaking are non-competitive. Each candidate is judged and graded on merit, and may receive the distinction for which he or she has entered. The auditions have been specially adapted for school uses, and provide all the assessment and direction that non-professional candidates need. They are essential to the development of elocution and speech-training as well as providing the simplest, most direct and effective introduction to poetry and a sense of its values and construction.

Supporting these claims, the English Mistress of a girls' high school writes: "Seeing the good results of the Society's work during the short time I have known it, I feel that if the value of its examinations were better known our high schools and training colleges would benefit enormously," and the Duchess of Atholl, in a letter from the Board of Education, Whitehall, London, S.W., wrote after personal experience of one of the Society's auditions: "I can assure you that the Board of Education and its Inspectors fully share my own view of the importance of teaching children the speaking of verse, and that they are entirely at one with the Society in their desire to encourage children to read and make themselves familiar with poetry. May I add an expression of my personal good wishes for the work of the Society and my hope that it may be increasingly appreciated and understood?"

The practical value of The Poetry Society's verse-speaking awards is attested by the following report from the English Mistress of a girls' public school: "One of our recent candidates for the Bronze Medal got a coveted post in a larger school one week after gaining the Bronze Medal, solely on account of that qualification for her English work among children—a proof that even in these remote parts the value of the work of the Society is appreciated and understood."

The headmistress of another important school which has specialised in verse-speaking as indicated by The Poetry Society, states that the Board of Education Inspectors at a recent visit were pleased and impressed by the work in this subject and said that every child should be encouraged to take part in it. "I would like to say that in this school, where I have only worked for four terms, and where previously

poetry was almost a closed subject, there is now such a vital and eager interest in it that seventy out of the hundred girls give much of their free time to speaking and reading verse, and look forward with intense delight to your visits for The Poetry Society's auditions."

THE RECOGNITION of *The Times*:

Apropos the early and sustained prestige of this vital activity of The Poetry Society, following on a Forbes-Robertson audition in 1910 reported in *The Times* and other leading papers, our premier newspaper devoted a leading article to this important phase of the Society's work, which is as pertinent and applicable now as it was thirty-three years ago:

"At a meeting of The Poetry Society the other day, Mr. Forbes-Robertson, after hearing some of the members read and recite poetry, advised them to refrain from gesticulation, which, he said, was out of place in readings or recitations of poetry. It is pleasant to find an actor insisting upon this fact, for the influence of the stage upon the delivery of poetry has often been disastrous. Actors are apt to be too dramatic even when they deliver blank verse on the stage. Sometimes, indeed, they tear the rhythm to tatters, as if they thought the author wrote verse only by mistake, and they were doing him a kindness by turning it into prose. This is bad enough; but the dramatic delivery of poetry that is not dramatic is far more distressing. Many reciters seem to be ignorant of the fact that rhythm, in all poetry that is worth reciting, is a means of expression; indeed, that rhythm and sense are so closely connected that the one cannot be understood without the other. Spoil the rhythm and you spoil the sense; misunderstand the sense and you will mar the rhythm. In fact, good verse is said wrongly if it is not said rhythmically; and any dramatic airs and graces which break the rhythm, or even distract the hearer's attention from it, are not merely superfluous but mischievous. A reciter of poetry ought no more to gesticulate than a violinist ought to wave his bow about in the middle of his performance. Music, in the one case, and words, in the other, are the only proper means of expression; and in good poetry there is even less occasion for displays of virtuosity than in good music. A reciter's first aim should be to understand thoroughly the poem which he proposes to recite; not merely the sense of it, but also the quality of its emotion; for he cannot understand the one without understanding the other. And he cannot understand either unless he is aware of the expressive function of metre and rhythm.

"We say metre and rhythm, because rhythm is necessary to preserve metre from mere sing-song. It is the peculiar character of each line, expressive of its peculiar sense and emotion, which is imposed upon the general pattern of the metre. A familiar instance is to be found in the line—'Of man's first disobedience and the fruit—.' Here a reader who does not give careful attention to the sense will adhere to the strict metrical pattern, lay no stress on the word *first,* and spoil both the rhythm and the meaning of the verse. In all good poetry there are such delicate varieties of rhythm; and the reader or reciter, if he searches for these and uses them as means of expression, will find that there is no room in his art for dramatic effects. He must know how to manage his voice, of course, so that his audience may not be troubled by its defects. But when he can do that he has nothing to think about but the phrasing of his poetry, which should be musical rather than dramatic, and expressive as the phrasing of music is expressive. Mr. Forbes-Robertson gave one piece of advice which might be dangerous to readers who do not understand the importance of phrasing. He laid great stress, we are told, upon the beauty in the mere sound of many words, apart from their position in a line or phrase. Therefore, he said, it behoved reciters to be very careful to give out the entire preciousness of the sound of

such words. Now it is perfectly true that some words are more beautiful in sound than others, although it is very difficult to dissociate sound from meaning. But beauty of rhythm is in all good poetry far more important than the beauty of particular words; and, the better the poetry, the more difficult it is to dissociate their beauty from their meaning or from their position in a line or phrase. There are many poems, popular with reciters, in which great stress is laid upon a single word often repeated. Poe's 'Raven' is an example, with its *Nevermore*. But these are seldom good poems, and the methods of delivery which they suggest should not be applied to good poems. It would be disastrous, for instance, to lay great stress upon the word *forlorn* at the end of the famous verse in Keats's 'Ode to the Nightingale,' for such a stress would destroy the rhythm of the whole passage, which depends upon a very even intonation.

"The treatment of rhyme is one of the most difficult problems in the delivery of poetry. Reciters often say rhymed verse as if they were trying to conceal the fact that it is rhymed. But poets would scarcely use rhymes if they did not mean them to be heard; and it is said that many good poets, in reading their own poetry, are apt to lay as great stress on the rhymes as on the rhythm. Certainly a reciter should not be afraid of rhymes. Where a rhyming word is important in sound or sense he should sound it boldly; and even when the sense runs over without a break into the next line he should not be too anxious to insist upon its continuity. For in poetry lines are facts that are not meant to be ignored. Indeed, rhymes are there to emphasise them. But the good poet usually shows, by the use of strong or weak rhymes, how far he means them to be stressed. In the 'Ancient Mariner,' for instance, which is a model in all the formal excellences of poetry, it is quite clear that the rhymes are meant to be stressed in the verse:

'The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.'

For here the rhyme words are both important in sense and strong in sound. On the other hand, the rhymes should be softly sounded in the verse:

'Sometimes a-dropping from the sky,
I heard the skylark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seem'd to fill the earth and air
With their sweet jargoning!'

For, apart from the weakness and imperfection of the rhyme sounds, the rhythm would be spoilt by any emphasis on the last words of the lines. In fact, rhyme is a part of metre, and, with metre, is always subject to rhythm. Understand the rhythm of a poem and you will know how to treat its rhymes. The more expressive a poem is, the more it is swayed by rhythm; and the good reciter will allow his voice to be swayed by rhythm as if he were thinking aloud and rhythm were the natural expression of his own thoughts"

This issue of the *Gazette* also contained the following paragraphs:

Appreciating the importance of elocution and the desirability of applying it to the art of speaking verse, the Society is anxious to get into closer touch with schools and colleges, and to encourage the intelligent teaching of reading and speaking, and the study of poetry. We should be glad to get into communication with schools desirous of adequately dealing with the cognate subjects, and to recommend or supply competent teachers as well as to organise institutional Centres. Private and secondary schools would find many advantages in co-operation with the Society, not the least being

the infusion of interest and vitality into the study of elocution.

Apropos of this, we note, with interest the remarks of the new vicar of St. Oswald's, Fulham, who is attached to the Bishop of Winchester's Theological College at Farnham, teaching the principles of voice production as applied to work in church. "Before a man goes up into the pulpit," said Mr. Ward, in an interview, "he ought to know what he has got to say and how to say it, and when he has said it he should stop. The dramatic possibilities of the Bible are tremendous. Before I read a lesson I get a picture of it in my mind, and then if I cannot put that picture before the people I am reading to I have failed. I start my instruction by teaching men how to breathe properly. I divide my course into departments. Intoning is one, though I would do away with it in a great many churches as unnecessary. Discriminating and intelligent reading of the lessons is another. Reading prayers is a third, and general elocution for all purposes, especially preaching, is one of the most important sides of the work. Lifelessness is driving men out of churches." Mr. Ward advocates a reasonable but real test in reading and speaking for all candidates for ordination.

"THE POETRY REVIEW" IN PARLIAMENT

Hansard for November 18th, 1942, reported Commander Sir Archibald Southby (Epsom), in the debate on the Address, as concluding a lengthy speech as follows:

> "'It seems to me that the people who talk loudest about post-war equality are those who deny the right of anyone who disagrees with them to share in the planning of the new world, but I am certain of one thing, and it gives me great hope and courage. If the little man, who is the embodiment of British commonsense and sanity, is capable, as he is, of destroying Hitler and Mussolini and all their works, he is quite capable, when the war is over, of destroying bureaucracy'. He says in effect, in the words of Geoffrey Dobbs (THE POETRY REVIEW, Sept., 1941):
>
> We who in the ashes dwell
> Want no planned and ordered hell
> Fight no wars to be policed
> When the bombs and fires have ceased
> Life's too precious far to give
> For any freedom but to live."

We hold up the printing of this issue to insert the following paragraph which appeared in *The Times*, March 11th, 1943:

MR. A. J. G. RUSSELL

"Mr. Arthur J. G. Russell, who died on Tuesday at Tree Tops, Haslemere, at the age of 56, was a grandson of Lord John Russell (later first Earl Russell), the Victorian Prime Minister. He was a solicitor by profession, but retired many years ago from active work to devote himself to literary studies, and for almost 20 years he was new verse editor to THE POETRY REVIEW, for which he had an admirable flair. Shy, secluded, and remote, he gave impartial and impersonal consideration to verse submitted from all sources, patiently and conscientiously reading many thousands of poems each year, making acute comments thereon which, in the course of time, have been of the utmost value to tens of thousands of verse writers all over the world. He never tired of this exacting work, and when incapacitated by serious illness he was eager to return to it at the first opportunity."